

RAIN

M A G A Z I N E

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FISHER POETS

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FISHER POETS EDITION

SPRING 2007

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Cover Design and Ad Layout: Bradley Knox

Page Layout and Design: Larissa Williams

Contributors Notes : Kirsten Trued

Table of Contents: Brittney Haskell

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Nancy Cook, Faculty Advisor
RAIN Magazine
1653 Jerome Ave.
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ncook@clatsopcc.edu

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SUNDAY BRUNCH: COFFEE AND SPILLING THE BEANS

Rachael Burbank

We find comfort in a violet oasis of velvet:
chairs whose furs seem to hold our hands
and whose ears perk up
whenever we want to vent.
We come to them in waves,
craving a double tall dark
and handsome
with no whipped cream.
For about an hour we
giggle, snicker, and snort
about how cute the guy in the blue hat was
or the nerve of that girl showing up
and the inevitable walk of shame stories.
These chairs know
who's cheating on who,
the answers to all the tests
how she likes the frappuccino
while I prefer the iced chai.
They hear the cleverness of great scholars
gabbing on their headset cell phones,
but they never talk back,
they keep our secrets.
They don't give you advice
they don't judge you
they don't tell you what you want to hear
that comes from the girls in the chairs next to you.
Those chairs are a Sunday service
that doesn't involve singing a hymn
but still allows the little old ladies to chat
over who gained weight
and who shouldn't be wearing that linen skirt
after Labor Day.

Fresh Gift

Most fish stories are exaggerated or false, but recently I learned of a true fish story. An Astoria man doing yard work behind his home was a bit surprised when a thumpingly big Columbia River salmon plonked down quite fresh in front of him. The salmon was large enough to have killed him if it had hit his head, but the man was spared. Unfortunately, the salmon was not. Having escaped the talons of a bald eagle (seen flapping off distractedly), the fish probably died on impact on the grass. The man wasted no time. He sacrificed the fresh gift from the heavens on the backyard barbecue.

Flying Fish

There is another local flying fish story, this one based at Astoria High School. Last May, during a track meet, the javelin throw had to be postponed briefly when fish began dropping onto the track and field. It seems that hundreds of thousands of pencil-long coho salmon smolts were being released into Youngs Bay across the road, causing a great fluttering of feathers among the Caspian terns in the area. The birds caught up too many fish in their bills, and as they flew over the track, local gulls met them midair, squabbling over their fishing rights....

Chase

What happens when you cross a sea lion with a salmon? In other words, what happens when you make a sea lion angry by taking a salmon out of its mouth? A friend was sitting in a restaurant overlooking the Columbia not long ago. Glancing out the window over the river, she spotted a sea lion coming up from the water with a salmon in its mouth. As my friend watched, a bald eagle flew in and snatched the salmon away. But since the salmon was so large, the eagle could only flap along the surface of the river as it tried to gain altitude. The sea lion gave chase through the water, nearly catching both fish and bird.

Bully Game

An osprey hovered high over the pilings on the Columbia this evening as I took the Astoria Riverwalk with a friend. Wingspan for these birds, up to six feet, is almost the same as a bald eagle's, so the osprey when it comes on the scene is one to be reckoned with. Other birds pay attention to it. This particular bird seemed to enjoy a bully game of swooping in close to a piling just to frighten a few gulls away. The gulls, not known for

their intellect, would screech and make a quick getaway under the shadow of the raptor. Then as soon as the osprey had found another crowd of gulls to scare several yards away, the first would return to their posts. The osprey could have landed on any piling it wanted, but it chose to merely terrorize.

Under the Surface

Don't you wonder what's under the surface of the river as it flows by the town? There must be shoals of ancient lumber dropped from the banks, weighed down by mud and years. Once in a while the underground makes them rise, and they float up to the top where ships disembark them. Somewhere everywhere, seals and salmon hunt and parry – all are hungry, just trying to make a living – this is where they live and move and have their being.

Gusty Wet Walk

Suddenly, after four months of uncompromising warmth and rare, lovely sunshine, November has brought the coast what it's famous for about eight months of the year: bone-cold rain. The bank teller greeted me the other day, as I walked in dripping from my gusty wet walk down the hill toward town, saying, "Well, we finally got our weather." I shook my head and told her I liked our other weather better. "But I like this," she countered; "you can stay inside and just listen to it." If offered a choice, I would take the warm blue skies as I walked up and down the streets doing errands and whatnot, and at night I would go home for some tea and build a fire. That's when the rain would start, and I would gladly fall asleep listening.

Anxious Voyage

Yesterday we all had ample warning there would be angry wind gusts of 70 mph along the coast. And the winds came, ferociously, mercilessly, with sideways rain, while I was still walking around downtown Astoria, picking up a few things for the storm. While I was in the drugstore, a man came blowing in to say the Columbia River Bar had been closed to ship traffic for twelve hours. When the Columbia River closes, you can know that the weather is rough. On the sidewalk, awnings were being ripped from their poles. Doors were swinging wildly. I tried to walk against the rain and wind but had to keep stopping in shops along the way. "What are you 'doing' here?" the shopkeepers wondered. "Trying to get back to my truck," I'd say; "it's only two blocks now." Today, after the storm, the tidy people of Astoria are out fixing their property. Overnight, big old trees snapped and fell, and like water, they collected in low places, rolling into the swollen river, making an anxious voyage for spotters on ships' bridges today, but for me the day is all warm forgiving

sun.

How Everything Was

Today I had three meals at three restaurants in three different towns, not my usual fare but a fine one. If it's not too busy—and winter on the Coast is never too busy—the people who serve you a meal don't just slap something on the table. Basically they want to know what's going on in your life. I had breakfast in Warrenton at a cafe like Cheers, where the owner knows your name and often calls it out as you walk in. She told me two jokes which I won't repeat here; too long. I had a croissant for lunch at a little espresso shop in Cannon Beach, where the young barista asked what paperback I was reading. When she saw it was *Diary of Anne Frank*, we talked about our mutual amazement at such a book. Tourists turned and stared; how could she and I talk about something other than coffee? Tonight I had dinner in Astoria with my friend at a pub in a renovated 1875 cannery, set on pilings over the Columbia. The setting sun flashed off the surface of the river for a few minutes, turning everyone into gold. The owner came over to our table and wanted to know how everything was.

Golden Egg

It's a lazuli Sunday morning. The forecast is just a graphic sun in a blue sky. It's dawn as I write, and the sky above the river is pink, and a seagull floats by every few minutes to say hi to the morning. One by one, they appear and vanish. Nobody knows where they sleep. Large tough cats patrol the gardens. It's too early for the songbirds. Maybe I'll hear them when the sun breaks over the edge of the hills like a golden egg at the edge of a cast iron griddle.

Improbably

Birds go away, but they come back. Red-winged blackbirds behind the town of Cannon Beach have been flashing their red and yellow epaulets through the wetlands for several months now. Two eagles have constructed a five-foot-diameter nest in a tall spruce beside the rail trail in Warrenton. Yesterday I could see their nest high up near the top, built improbably from logs as big around as their bodies. I hear a robin outside this morning saying, "Here, here, here it is, here." Where?

Spring Questions

When daffodils and bluebells and tulips come out of the ground, why aren't they muddy? Why are they soaked with color? What makes them stand straight like spears? Yesterday it downpoured all day. This morning, an apricot sunrise. About six a.m., I tiptoed barefoot

around the sopping grass to photograph the bluebells. A Crayola crayon would call their color periwinkle. The rhododendrons behind the bluebells were of a color that could only be called raspberries on fire.

Train Village

Half an inch of snow on the ground yesterday morning, surprising even the watchful weathercasters. Imagine, from the vantage point of the living room window facing east: the white flocked miniature train village of Astoria. Now imagine the studio window facing west into the back garden: shivering daffodils, chattering cherry blossoms. On the walkway down to the mailbox: bluebells collect the snow in each blue cup.



ROCK SQUARE
Brandon Sawaya



CHILD OF THE GRASS
Kristin Shauck

FOR MY LITTLE SISTER WHO CAN'T REMEMBER THE GOOD TIMES

Monte Reed

Listen. Can't you hear the creaky alders rattling out
familiar names over and over in the branches that make a canopy
vaulting our mother's garden patch? In the distance, that's the sound the
jake brake makes when the log truck crests the hill and starts down the other side
to home.

Bend your cheek down near your daughter's
brand new one. Ask yourself if you really believe that much
in luck. Look closely.

Whether you know it or not, you've been here before.

See the houses that sit so close, gathered together old ladies on
one side of a large table with many empty seats.

Notice they all have the same shutters,
kittens, baskets of socks, rolls of waxed paper for wrapping
sandwiches to send off to work.

Let's pour out the last of the wine. If my glass comes up fullest,
let me make it up to you. I have
an agate in my jewelry box Mother and I
picked off Road's End Beach in Lincoln City just about the time
you were born. I'll give it to you.

Put it in your pocket so at odd times of the day
your hand can go to it
smoothing its glassy sides.

It is showing you a history you can't remember
but surely can tell.

On separate sides of the same row
we start the way she taught my mother;
with four sure hands
buckets dangling from hay ropes around our necks.

Grandma's talking pies, jam
freezing berries with sugar
versus without, but I am wishing. Finish the stories
my mother started: the farm at Ivy Station Road. Give me
the missing pieces of peeling chitum bark.
Dig up the marbled yellow shells of the razor clams,
Lay out the silvery fish scales on the conveyor belt before the cannery burns.
Tell me about my uncles, the soldiers who came home.
Divorce Grandpa by not setting his place
at the table one night.

But she has waited patiently all winter for this—
looking past the gap in the row before her, imagining instead,
lines of jewel-like mason jars on her top cupboard shelf.
All is set aside for pick plop pick till she is far ahead.
Distant tractors buzzing in my ears kick up
fine dust that settles around me. The climbing sun
burns away the low fog clinging to the bushes urging me.
I say a rare prayer for speed and time enough this time
to close the space between us.

But she is waiting for me at the end of the row ready
to trudge the flats to the scale. I figure she's stopping for my sake
long before she's ready so I offer
to keep on. But she smiles, shakes her head,
tells me I'm a good girl. Anyway, she says
we can always come back.
Maybe when the green peaches hanging low
on the stub trees around us are ripe.

There's a man who comes into the tavern
shaggy hair and sideburns
the same striped shirt everyday.
Forget manners, trivia, front page news.
In love, he doesn't realize the bartender gets paid
to smile.

Outside, high on a wire above the river
a pessimistic crow sits every day at four o'clock.
He watches the cook, waitress and dishwasher
chain smoking wearing the same old white shirts
just like always.

Downtown, a lawyer logs fifteen hour days swigging
tumblers of whiskey, complaining how political
the world is becoming as he tries to keep the mayor
out of jail. His secretary sits playing solitaire promiscuously
handing out privileged information.

Further up the hill, an old lady no one ever forgets
sits alone in a room of her choosing with a calendar.
It is a scorecard marking points of who comes to pay attention.
Nothings really wrong here and she's had all the rings, teacups,
silvery teaspoons she ever wanted. Just spoiled, she
never learned to eat alone.

The town continues to spin which is fine.
It wants new houses to be built where the plywood mill used to be.
The cruise ships coming into port add more scenery for the lawyer, the secretary
and the old lady than they take away.
Everything is the same for the man and the bartender at the tavern.
Even his striped shirt and her thin smile though the crow notices the dishwasher
and the cook

wear nice, familiar second hand coats to smoke
because its getting colder outside.

It's out in the country where you notice most
what we are left with. Not in the rural routes that now have names or
corn and pancake feeds becoming tourist attractions. That's actually a bit
romantic, not at all hard to live with.

No. It is most noticeable in standing next to the old men on the bridge above
Big Creek. It is in watching the salmon jumping upstream above the churning waters.
It is noticing those collecting in the deeper, stiller waters along the edges to rest.
It is that we aren't left with any words to tell them
so we talk about fishing.

I'm forty-six, and absolutely sure something had passed me by, or at the very least, was passing me by. Whatever it was, it was not moving at the speed of light. If I took a good hard look, I was sure it would be moving at a tangible touching pace. It was a feeling I first noticed several years ago, coming on as a quiet uncertainty. I found myself questioning this life of mine, the way a yellow traffic light leaves me wondering-speed up or slow down, and before I knew it, I would find myself sitting here. Whenever I worked in my garden the feeling left, as it did when I engaged in anything physical, anything requiring something other than mental effort. Pulling out the weeds did that, grabbing those annoyances, yanking them from my sense of order, no longer encroaching amongst the cosmos. And just like that, all the uncertainty abated. Standing up, brushing my hands over my jeans, I felt accomplished. But, next to the magnolia tree was a fresh batch of horsetails. Tall and irreverent, there spiked presence reminded me, I would never be done. But there was only so much I could do, and not finishing what I started let the feeling creep back in.

I washed my hands under the bathroom faucet, and just to make sure, gave them an extra squirt from the almond soap dispenser. My fingers squirmed in amongst themselves in an orgy of fanatical cleansing. A quick rinse with cold water followed; I was clean. It was this ritual that let me know I was done with gardening for the day, before the horsetails lured me into another bout of weeding. And if those horsetails were a little too vigorous with their demands, my weekly run with the lawn mower would provide temporary relief. But, I knew those green feathery spikes would be back, just like that feeling, protruding up through my subconscious poking into my awareness. So finally, I hit upon it—a fast. I haven't fasted in decades, haven't had much desire for it. It was one of those past youthful long-hair adventures, conjuring up what I thought would let me have a peak at enlightenment. But yet, there was one thing I remembered about pushing myself to the brink: allowing me to hover on the raw wound of vulnerability. I don't mean the physical fatigue thing; I mean the emotional thing: strange feelings seeping to the surface that I usually kept buried. Stop eating for a while and you can forget about life's tried and true repression. Abandoning this should please Julia; she's been my long time steady for years. She's been on my case about my lack of . . . what again was she said I was lacking? No matter. When she gets back from her symposium, I should be ripe with my vulnerability flourishing.

Here was the thing about fasting; I lacked the motivation to do the cold-turkey thing. So a pre-fast was on the menu: dropping to 1500 calories, keeping me mildly hungry

while my body adjusted. Two spoonfuls of this stuff called Super Food mixed into eight ounces of apple juice and—breakfast is served. Lunch was a salad followed by a supper's worth of rice and steamed vegetables with a half slice of melted cheese to let my body know a bit protein was still around. I've been doing at it for three weeks. It was odd how the body placed its demands on the mind like it owned it. Why can't I just insist my mouth stop chewing long enough to meet my goal—a very modest one, 1500 calories. For days I was regimented: master of my self. But late in the third week, when the late afternoon light painted the kitchen walls in dismal grays, I noticed the small pile of sunflower seeds. I had left on the counter in a willowware bowl. In a second's thought, I popped them in my mouth. Their toasted salty essence flooded my tongue making a profound connection.

It was as if my palate was in league with my stomach, and in the flash on a swallow, my appetite was resurrected. There was the apricot that was on the verge of over ripening. What choice did I have? Toss this beauty away? Standing over the kitchen waste basket, I bit down, tearing off half of its sweet dripping flesh, devouring all of it in under a minute. The pleasure of its sugar flowed over the sides of my stomach walls; a shame grew warm against my chest. I tried to rationalize, reassuring myself it was wrong to waste. After all, hadn't my momentary lapse prevented me from wasting away? That was melodramatic. Just the realization my mind was no match for my stomach. My stomach constantly reminded me how much my tongue and nose loved to take every possible speck of salt, every tinge of bitter and sweetness mixing them into those endless combinations of culinary joy. If I can just gain enough self control . . . Then what? I'd realized I'm not the mindless container pushed and pulled around by currents beyond my control. After all, it's about control. Either you have it or you don't. I was not about to surrender, knowing everything but me got to make the final choice. I would reclaim my will. There was one more over ripened apricot, the remaining remnant of a blue glazed ceramic bowl setting on the kitchen table. It rested there, a golden temptress, taunting me as a plump obscene challenge. I picked it up, marched over to the wastebasket—and hesitated. This dilemma of waiting, when all I had to do was plunge it into my mouth, but the calories of this thing. I dropped it into the waste basket. It ricocheted off a soup can and nestled in amongst a crumpled paper towel. I stared at it for an eternity, but refused to kneel down to my weakness—a shallow precarious victory. Anyway, Julia was coming; I wasn't going to have her see me like this. I went outside, down the porch steps and decimated the horsetails.

On the third day of my total fast, I was on my hands and knees, scrubbing the kitchen floor with an old terrycloth towel: preparation for Julia's arrival. She would get a look at the new me as we sat and dined on the sumptuous meal I would prepare for her. Any scuff marks on the tile floor got the extra treatment with a sprinkle of Bon Ami and

a few extra scrubs. Nearing the waste can, I stopped and slid it to the side. Running the towel over this spot, I glimpsed just a speck of a golden something. My heart skipped a beat; I knew what it was. After all it had been three days, and I'd be ending my fast this evening anyway. What was the harm? Peering into the wastebasket, I looked at the apricot nestled against a paper towel, off to the side of a Progresso soup can. Slowly reaching in, I told myself this was not wrong; after all, what was the greater sin? Picking up the delicate piece of fruit, I admired its almost perfect form. Its golden jewel like skin was exquisite. It had to be tasted to be believed. Noticing something off to its side, I turned it slightly, horrified by the nickel size mold festering on its once perfect skin. My thumb was close to touching its oozing wound. Throwing it back into the wastebasket, I stood, removing myself from temptation knowing it had taken divine intervention to keep me pure. I felt myself become unsteady and placed a hand on the sink, waiting for the dizziness to pass. Standing there I thought of Julia, horsetails, and my stomach—always my stomach. It's funny how fasting had raised my vulnerability, and loosened up what needed to be set free—fast and loose. I knew what was on her mind. We've known each other for years, and everything had been whittled down to commitment. I understood commitment, the need of it, or her need for it. It was why my stomach constantly questioned my latest commitment with its grumbling remarks, never satisfied.

"Welcome home," I said grabbing her soft luggage and setting it off to the side of the living room, giving her a hug.

"It's good to see you," she said. "You can not believe the traffic and that airport . . . it-was-so congested." The words plunked from her lips like over ripe apricots.

"Well, you're home now," I reassured. "Wait until you see the meal I've prepared for us?" This simple truth was undeniable; the kitchen's aroma had been seeping down the hallway into the living room for over an hour. I felt weak and sat down on the sofa.

"Remember what we talked about?" she questioned in that way of her that meant to inform more than to ask.

"About?" I felt a hard pang in my stomach.

"About commitment." There was sternness in her voice that made her brown eyes go black. She always had those eyes that made it difficult to tell where the iris ended and the pupil began. I wasn't sure where I was at this moment, but those eyes of hers knew, boring into me with a certainty. What I really wanted to do was eat. It was amazing, truly amazing this need to put something in my mouth. Life was peculiar that way, the way one had a need to stick almost anything into one's mouth—sex was like that.

"Oh yeah, commitment," I said, catching a whiff of our dinner tantalizingly close: thin strips of veal topped with a mild spiced cheese sauce, fresh steamed asparagus, and those hot rolls fresh from the oven, begging for a slab of butter, melting with a sincerity. It was

these very rolls that had forced me to offer up tremendous effort not to prematurely stuff one in my mouth. But I had resisted, I was strong. I had control. I had—

“Then you do remember?” she asked. She brushed back her stringy blond hair with a little shake of her head and a sneer of her very full lips that always seemed on the verge of blowing a bubble when ever she spoke.

“Of-c-course,” I stammered, standing quickly. I felt a profound weakness climbing up my legs and a light headedness I could only relate as something connected to my fast. I gripped both of her hands, feeling my legs buckle.

“What smells so good?” she asked, her head tilting up, her eyes moving from me towards the kitchen.

“It’s something special, something for us,” I pleaded, my knees coming to rest on the kitchen floor as if genuflecting to the Madonna.

“Us,” she said wrinkling her nose.

Watching me sink to my knees, her hands still held mine tight. The only thing kept me from nose diving into her fleshy stomach was the ivory buttons of her blouse pressing into my forehead.

“You and I . . . for us,” I confirmed, looking up at her nostrils with three button imprints on my forehead.

“Well, for Christ sake-just say it Leonard.”

“Julia.”

“All right, if you won’t, I’ll do it. . . .Leonard, will you marry me,” she asked.

I kept staring at her, those nostrils with those tangled black hairs.

“Lenny, just say it.”

I felt her large hands wrap over my shoulders as she slowly pulled me to my feet, my knees still bent, still seeking the cold comfort of hard linoleum.

“If you not gonna say it . . . then we might as well eat,” she hissed.

“Yes!-Yes!” I exclaimed.

“Well,” she said, “Was that so bad?”



WATCH THE SWING
John Wubben

Grampa with an Adam's apple,
the apple that went up and down.

He takes me to the ostrich farm,
gives me an orange to feed the giant bird.
Its throat bounces like Grampa's apple.
Grampa with a red hooked nose
and wrinkles around his eyes
says he was really a bird
changed into a man for just a short time.
He cackles a laugh
like the crow outside my window.

Grampa with morning breakfast:
coffee poured into a saucer
strawberry preserves on scrambled eggs
Irish whiskey bottle.
He slurps saucer coffee,
spoons strawberry eggs.
Down the hatch! he says
Tips the bottle round and round till
all is empty but him.

Grampa with cigars in his vest pocket
takes me to see a blimp,
says it is a huge white cigar
no one can ever smoke.
See, it's tied up outside to see it explode
I think Just like Uncle Dewey's New Year cigars.
Grampa plays a 78 record
with real voices from radio.
The announcer shouts, even cries
because the blimp Hindenburg blows up
Bodies falling .oh they're falling.oh God.

Grampa in his Los Angeles house
spooning peas into my baby brother
says he was a cowboy friend of the Lone Ranger
each pea on the spoon is a Tonto bullet
shooting down inside
to make my brother strong and fast on the draw,
says the picture on the wall
(a calendar with an Indian princess
on the edge of a cliff raising her arms)
shows his first wife
praying for a warrior to help her,
there all alone he had to save her,
carried her away on his white horse

It rains day and night
forty days and forty nights he says
but it will be all right because he has an ark
so we can get to the grocery store.
We ride in a small boat with oars,
watching animals and people try to cross
knee-high river-streets.
He sings Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum
says he was a pirate on the seven seas
so we don't have to worry about the water
going higher and higher.

Grampa with a new wife Gwen
lean square-jawed angular like a skinny horse.
I say she's a real witch.
When Grampa goes to work
My brother and I hide go to the attic
lock ourselves in our rooms.
She shouts Be good or else!
and visions of Hansel and Gretel appear.
In the backyard we play cowboys
roping the littlest girl in the neighborhood to a tree.
She has to be the captured Indian princess.
We stop. Gwen strides across the grass

and grabs me. Now I'm tied to the tree
and everyone runs away.
Dinnertime comes and goes
and a thin moon hangs in a dark cold sky.
Grampa finally comes back, unties me,
tells me the story of Pocahontas
saving a cowboy tied to a tree.
He says She's the hero. Think about it.

Grampa at the crocodile farm
says That's where your mother gets all her shoes.
I couldn't see any shoes, just teeth.
He laughs and lifts me up onto the fence
to see a mud-world of sleeping crocodiles
yawning huge mouthfuls.
He says Ask them where the shoes are.
I whisper my question, fast,
scramble down the fence.
He hugs me tight and says That's my brave girl!

Home, I look in Mother's closet—
so many shoes they take a whole wall—
I say Grampa I don't see any with teeth!
Grampa laughs a big roar, his Adam's apple
goes up and down.
Smart girl! You caught me that time!

The old wooden boat lies down
tipped as if to watch the river go by,
paint pealed and flaked, old nets rolled along its sides
like veins on a face—
worn and aged like Grandpa. just yesterday buried.

And it's hard to think there'll be no more fishing with Grandpa
no tales of the river to take the boy in Grandpa's boots—
back when he trekked the edge of a lake near Selkirk way up in Canada
where the river began.

Grandpa called the river a regular sidewinder
cause it wiggled like a snake,
slipping north, sliding south past the border,
skimming southwest over lava flows,
slicing a southeast gorge through volcanic rock,
slithering through rainforests and dry flats—
and fed by ten other rivers and hundreds of streams
to finally rush out to the churning sea.
It was hard to think of a snake 1200 miles long!

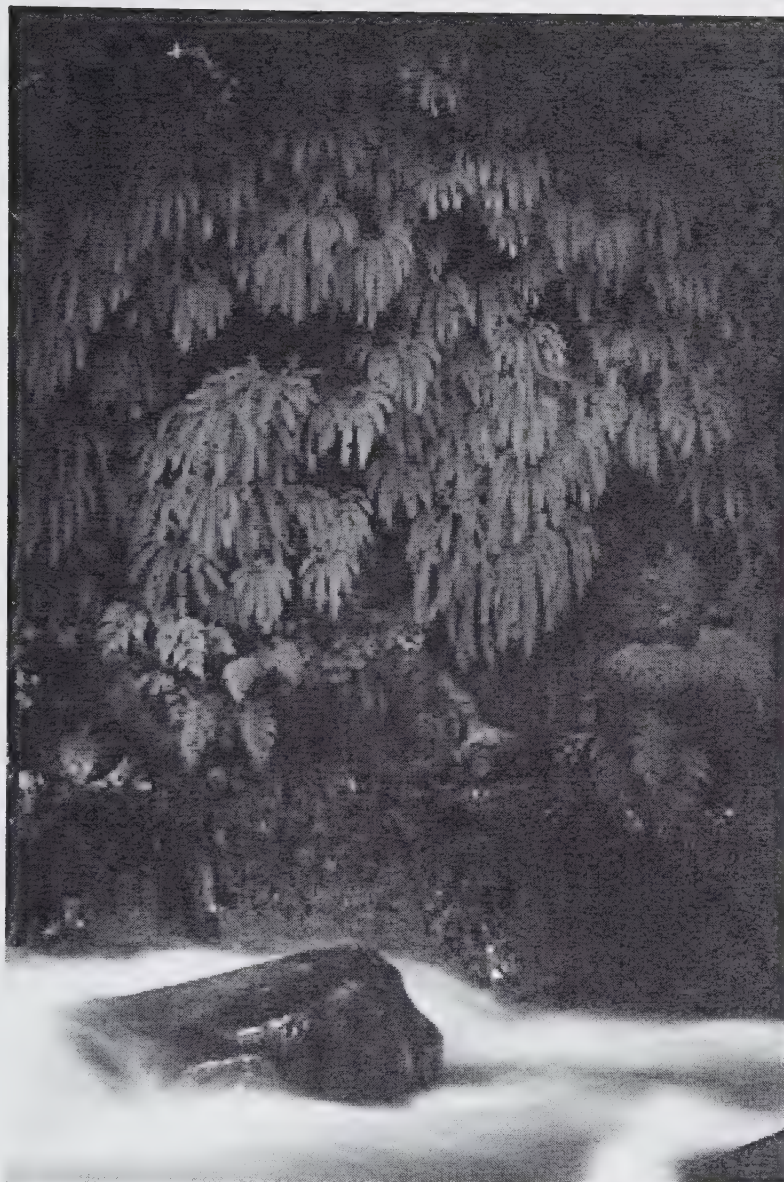
And Grandpa would tell him about Upriver,
fishing for 1000 pound Old Man Sturgeon,
how he'd seen dams wall-in the water
so it went rising up and down with
barges and fishing boats and yachts
in the locks that entrapped it.
He'd seen it meander through a labyrinth—
canals quenching thirsty cherries, beans and alfalfa,
and seen it open wide and smooth as a lake—
with windsurfers skimming the surface like dragonflies.

Grandpa told of building his house Downriver,
where a town grew from the waterway's bounty—
salmon piled in nets, logs piled on docks,

canneries and mills sprouting from planks—
trolleys and trains rode the river edge
and a south jetty fingered the meeting of river and sea.

He told of raising his own son,
the house settling in along the estuary—
the river always moving in their lives,
sometimes murky and brown,
sometimes smooth as blue ribbons
and how time turned like the tides
for the town:
salmon could not leap high enough,
gillnetters could not net enough,
trees could not grow fast enough,
how the rivertown rebuilt from fire,
and erected a column—
how his son raised up the boy's Papa there on the river—
and the town lived through wars,
mooring great ships out on the point afterwards,
then put up a span of bridge so's people needn't ferry across the river—
The town just kept on going.

The boy remembers these stories,
gazing out at the river, at the old boat, the old house—
reminders of time gliding by.
He knows he will stay here,
watch the river slide by every day of his life,
and just keep going.



STREAM & FERNS
Brandon Sawaya

BLIND PEDESTRIANS

Edward M. Ferguson

I walked the other day alone,
 But I traveled in a crowd.
They didn't know that I was there,
 With their noises brash and loud.

I floated on that rolling sea
 Of faces, all turned in
Toward heaven knows what selfish things
 That hid beneath the din.

I pondered as I walked along,
 What kind of souls are we
That look upon our fellow man
 With eyes that do not see.

That speak and don't know what we say.
 That listen, but don't hear,
The sounds of life that call to us,
 All day, and month and year.

How few of us have time to give
 The things that mean so much,
A smile, a laugh, a friendly wink,
 A tear, a kindly touch.

*Most anything is possible
when we make the effort to understand*

It took very little effort for her to keep up with the boat. Her massive tail swept with a slow, easy motion, propelling her torpedo-shaped body through the water two feet below the keel. She followed the boat eager to rob tender morsels from thinly disguised steel barbs.

She was a catfish. Not only that, she suspected she was the only catfish in the world who knew she was a catfish. She had known that for a long time, having been hatched and raised in the university aquatic lab.

She laughed to herself. Sometimes you had to wonder what these air-creatures were thinking when they tried to catch her with such crude methods. Since her escape from the university laboratory a year ago, she had played the game of stealing fishermen's bait, a game she always won.

Her first memories were of hiding in the dark corners of the breeding tank, being terrified, trying to avoid being eaten by the breeders. As she grew older the scientists began to pay attention to her survival abilities and separated her from the bigger fish.

She was the result of the first gene splicing experiments aimed at bridging the neurological and psychological abyss between air-creature and water-creature intellects.

Her escape from the lab, though fortuitous, had been something never before accomplished by any other. She was the "big one" that got away. But though she was glad to get away from the lab, there were fond memories of the caretaker who watched over the experimental animals. He had been a kind, gentle air-creature. She had liked him right away because of the compassionate expression in his eyes when he peered at her through the glass of the aquarium. The experiments were scary, but he had explained everything; assurances about what had happened, what would happen next, and how she could expect to feel. She wondered if he knew she understood, or if he was just talking to relieve his feelings of guilt for participating in such bizarre experiments.

She recalled the worried look on his face when the researchers subjected her to uncomfortable or painful tests. The electroshock experiments were the worst of all, and then to her horror, the researchers began to use electricity to punish her for not doing as well as they wanted; "to encourage her to excel" was the way they had put it. The pain was exquisite and she thought she might die, but she didn't, she learned instead.

After each experiment, the caring face of the caretaker was always there, looking through the glass, showing his concern for her. His expressions of sympathy revealed how disturbed he was with her having to endure the electricity, but he seemed powerless to help in any real way.

Then one night, he stayed extra late, his face close to the glass, his features lined with concern. He talked to her in a low excited voice. The way he kept glancing back over his shoulder at the laboratory door made her think he was nervous about something. It frightened her. She touched her nose to the glass, concentrating on the movement of his lips and the urgent tone in his voice.

She saw him crying and heard him mumbling something about their friendship coming to an end, how he had come to love her over the past ten years, and how he couldn't bear to see her sacrificed just so the researchers could see how their experiment was proceeding microscopically. Terror gripped her when she understood his words; she visualized herself being dissected by the unfeeling researchers.

Then, without warning, he scooped her out of the tank, wrapped her ponderous body in a wet blanket, and minutes later, lovingly placed her in the river. Out of water, the air had stung her gills, but she didn't struggle. She knew she was safe. She knew he was saving her from the knives of the researchers. During their journey to the river they touched, his skin upon hers. It was wonderful, and she thought how different they were, yet how much the same.

When the sudden ambience of the cool natural water engulfed her, it was like she had been reborn. She looked back at the caretaker and saw a strange look on his face. Perhaps it was that they would never see each other again. She felt the sadness too. If it hadn't been for him she would have done nothing more than exist in limbo, doing her tricks while she waited for more instructions, more tests, and then a horrible death. At the lab there was only a meager representation of the scents, sights, and sounds of the outside world. But now, in the river, life was real, and she drank deeply of the truth she found there.

She heard the caretaker say, "Goodbye Number 10. No matter what the consequence, I couldn't let them destroy you for such a trivial experiment. Have a good life!" Then she saw him turn and walk away into the summer darkness. All she could do was to watch him disappear without knowing how much she understood and how grateful she was.

It wasn't long before she realized being free was not quite as wonderful as she had first thought. She missed the order gone from her life. There were no more exercises to perform, no more reprimands for being obstinate, no more attention. Her new world had become more predictable than the old. There was not enough to keep her busy, not enough to think about. At night she had dreams of being back at the lab and showing off

for the caretaker and the researchers. There was little challenge living in the river. Finding food was no problem at all. She became bored and began to think that the electroshock experiments hadn't been so bad after all.

So lately, to fill time, she played a game with the fishermen; stealing their bait, laughing at their curses. They were her fools. She was superior. She found that outwitting the air-creature fishermen plus the danger of being caught provided her with a great deal of entertainment.

The prospect of danger kept the game interesting. She had seen other fish captured, seen them yanked from the water after recklessly swallowing a mouthful of bent steel cloaked in a delicious morsel. She pitied the fish who didn't have her advantage of superior intellect. They were creatures moved only by instinct, but, still, she felt they were brothers and sisters. She was angered that they were murdered while in the act of trying to get something to eat. The deaths she imagined they suffered made her shudder so she played the game for them as much as for herself as the only way to take revenge on the air-creatures for the suffering they caused.

While following the boats she heard the air-creatures discuss their fishing instruments and speak affectionately of them. She heard the sound of knives being sharpened, and she knew the result when that particular instrument was applied to the flesh of a fish. Those caught were never returned to the water, except on occasion when heads and entrails were carelessly tossed back. She vowed that it would never happen to her, that she would never allow herself to ever again come under the control of anyone or anything.

She found it interesting that with the possibility of getting caught, the game she played with the fishermen was more than fun, it was consuming. She had grown fat from outwitting the air-creatures by robbing the bait from their hooks. She chuckled at their curses when they thought that with the long-awaited tug they had finally hooked the big one, but then they reeled in empty lines.

The air-creatures' method of communicating was incredibly simple; she had learned to understand their words while at the university, however, reproducing the sounds she heard was a different matter. She found that while underwater, trying to mimic sounds ordinarily generated in air had limited success, but she kept trying anyway. She spent hours imitating how the words sounded and had succeeded in producing some that resembled what she thought she heard from the air-creatures in the boats. She practiced and practiced, trying to imagine how her words would sound in air. In the back of her mind, she sensed an impossible task, but it was a new twist on the game and better than being bored.

She enjoyed stalking the air-creatures in their boats and listening to their secrets, and she laughed at them and their biased selfish ways as they confided with each other, think-

ing they were alone. Most of them spoke of sex and their particular preferences in females. Although the words were spoken in earnest, she thought that much of what was said was merely wishful thinking, perhaps attempts of the creatures to convince their companions that such fantasies were indicative of life styles they enjoyed.

The boat she was currently trailing contained two air-creatures, and from what she could surmise from the conversation, they were a father and his son. These air-creatures seemed not so determined in catching fish as they were in being together and enjoying each other's company. She liked that. Perhaps catfish and some air-creatures were not so different.

The boat stopped, and her reverie was broken by a rock on a knotted rope, gurgling past, trailing a kaleidoscope of colored bubbles to the bottom of the river. Small sunfish flashed an array of colors, darting in and out of slanting shadows as the rock thumped softly into the mud, producing a soft brown cloud. Above, small insects dimpled the mottled surface of the water beneath overhanging trees. Suddenly the sunfish were back, feeding on the tiny struggling insects.

She ignored the bugs. She waited for the main course that was sure to come, and while she waited she listened to the air-creatures. She also heard the scraping of steel against stone as they sharpened their knives. They were talking about being poor, and she took that to mean that they didn't have everything they needed to enjoy life.

She didn't know how that could be; there was so much to eat.

They talked about life and death and not having enough time. Time for what? She didn't know.

It seemed the son, who was called Timmy, was sick. He said he was afraid to die.

So that was it! Now she felt sorry for them. She knew what it was to fear death and to lose family and friends.

The father, his name was Dad, was saying that it isn't how long you live that counts, it's how much you love that gives meaning to life. Dad's voice was soft and caring, and, for some reason sounded familiar. She could tell that Dad loved Timmy very much. She found out that Timmy's mother had died a couple of years ago and since then he had been sick. They spoke of something called God, and their voices were so serious she thought Timmy hadn't very long to live. She felt so very sorry for him; his voice sounded so helpless and frightened. She felt sorry for Dad, too, because of the sadness in his voice.

Their sorrow made her feel dismal. She couldn't help it. She didn't like to see other creatures suffer. She wished there was something she could do to let them know they weren't alone in the world; that others, different from themselves, knew and understood the feelings they were experiencing. But in her heart, she knew it was hopeless.

If only she could speak, she would tell them how to be content with their feelings, to

accept them as being a natural part of life. She would teach them how to blend love and joy and pain and disappointment altogether into a lifetime full of living, no matter how brief. As she saw it, lifetimes can be lived in seconds or centuries, that the amount of time really didn't matter. If she could speak she would reassure them that feelings were a good part of living and that, good or bad, not to feel, one might as well be dead. It was obvious that air-creatures wanted everything to fit into a neat little mold they had conceived for the way life should be for them. It seemed they couldn't appreciate adversity as an opportunity to grow, to become more than the ordinary. Perhaps electroshock training would help. Air-creatures appeared intent on avoiding the unexpected circumstances that makes blood rush, flesh quake, minds bend. Didn't they know they need more in their lives than clear water and sunny days? that problems to overcome make life good? Maybe there was no one to hunt them, no one to do some air-creature fishing. It seemed obvious that the eccentricities and surprises of life were a burden to them. What a shame! How much they were missing! She had often wished for a little surprise now and then to ease the growing weight of boredom from her own mind.

On a sudden impulse, she rose to the surface just inches from the side of the boat. She swallowed a bubble of air, then, forcing it back up past her lips, she said "Timmy!" vocalizing his name as she had heard Dad say it a few moments before. She was surprised at how easy it was when performed in the air, and although it sounded very different than when she had said it underwater, she thought she did quite well. She was disappointed when neither of the air-creatures took notice.

Her disappointment lasted only a moment. Shivers raced along her spine and she felt her blood pressure rise - she had recognized the man in the boat. Dad was her air-creature friend, the one at the University, the caretaker. It was he who had helped her to escape.

Settling to the bottom, she let her belly touch the soft mud. Her mind was in a turmoil. She glanced at the metal tag she still carried. Dad had clipped it to the base of her right pectoral fin years ago, and the bright red tag of a research animal still had the number of the experiment stamped on it. She read it: Number 10.

The most important being in her life was only a few feet away. She ignored the morsels being cast into the water and forced her mouth to form the word "Timmy," and then "Dad." Now she was more determined than ever to speak their language.

She wanted to thank Dad for his gift of freedom, and she wanted to thrill Timmy, to make him wonder, to free him from the worry of dying, to let him know that anything was possible, and that he had a great deal of control over his destiny. She practiced the names "Dad" and "Timmy" over and over, and other words she had heard them say, but it was no use. She thought they would never understand her underwater gibberish.

Then, if all that weren't enough to distract her, she saw a large piece of sweet dough

that must have fallen into the water; of all, it was her favorite. She wasn't hungry, but she wanted it. While still rehearsing the air-creature words, she glided toward the large succulent blob as it settled onto the river bed. She had little thought that the food might be bait, that it might hide sharp steel. If she waited too long it would be gone, the sun fish would eat it all.

Her mind whirled with the events of the last few minutes. What to do? How could she communicate with her friends in the boat?

Sunfish darted around the piece of dough, nibbling off small pieces. The Sunfish were going to eat it all! She charged, driving them away, and settling over the dough like a shark protecting it's kill, she checked out the Sunfish situation. Satisfied that she was the victor, she sucked the chunk of dough into her mouth.

The sting of the hook took her by surprise. She screeched and pulled in desperation against the irresistible force of the barb, but it only set the hook tighter. She had betrayed herself, and the relentless winding of the line began to draw her toward the boat.

Again, she threw herself against the pull of the line, instinctively diving for the bottom, determined either to break the force that held her, or to tear it from her mouth. She nearly reached the dark fingers of roots that struck down into the mud along the shore, the gate to safe caverns beneath the bank.

But the line held. It resisted, yet yielded gently, almost agreeably to her desperate struggle, holding fast with its terrible, steely bite.

She was tiring, and as the surface of the water approached she almost fainted with panic. With a heroic effort, she heaved against the mountain of pain. She saw the cool dark caverns beneath the river bank disappearing in the distance as the force of the barb drained her energy, hauling her toward the surface.

No-o-o! She fought even harder, diving again for the bottom of the river. She tried to wind the line around dead stumps and branches that seemed to be reaching up to save her. But she could not, and she cursed the force that held her tight, drawing her upward, relentlessly upward, toward what she knew would be a terrible death.

Suddenly she was in the boat. She was screaming; hot air scorching her gills. She saw their faces, the cruel instruments of death waiting for her in the bottom of the boat - blades glinting keen edges. She would be disemboweled, and her head cut off. She screamed again and again.

"Wow! Dad! Look at the size of this catfish!"

"Yeah, son. That baby's got to weigh 20 pounds. We're gonna have some fine eating for the next few days."

She was screeching and flopping around in the bottom of the boat.

"Knock it on the head, son. I can't stand to hear the sound a catfish makes when you

get it out of water.”

Timmy removed the hook from her mouth and reached for the heavy-handled knife.

She froze, her gaze riveted on the knife in Timmy’s fist. He was about to crush her head with the handle of the ponderous instrument, and then she would feel the sharp edge. The sunfish would feed on her remains.

Suddenly the words and how to say them came to her.

“No! Timmy! Don’t! Please! Let me go!”

Timmy gasped. He dropped the knife. For a moment their eyes locked, then without a word he picked her up and tossed her over the side.

“Whoa! Son! What are you doing?”

“Dad! Oh! Dad!” Timmy was shaking all over, his eyes shining with wonder.

“You won’t believe this! The fish said my name and it begged me to let it go. I couldn’t help it. I just couldn’t kill it.”

“What? The fish spoke to you?”

“I swear, Dad! It said my name, Timmy! Just as clear as anything! It said, No! Don’t! Please! Let me go! And there was a red tag clamped to its fin. It had number 10 stamped on it.”

Dad gasped. “My God!”

“Dad! It’s true! I swear it!”

“I believe you, Son.” Dad stared at the water. “Son, I think you just found an old friend of mine. It’s been ten years since the last I saw of her. I’ve often wondered what happened to her. So . . . now she has learned to speak.” Dad was silent for a few moments, then he said, “If any fish in the world could learn to speak it would have to be Number 10!”

The silence that followed was interrupted only by the gentle lapping of water against the sides of the boat. Father and son gazed at each other across a cool depth of flickering shade.

Soon Timmy asked quietly, “You knew a fish that could talk?”

Dad chuckled as he reeled in his fishing line.

“It was a long time ago, Son,” he said. “I let her go once, too. She’s the reason I don’t work at the lab anymore. When I knew her she couldn’t talk, but I figured she was smart enough.” He smiled and said, “Let’s go home. It’ll be dark soon and suddenly I’ve had enough fishing to last me a lifetime. On the way back, I’ll tell you the story of old Number 10, and how we became friends,” he said.

She heard a hum and saw the propeller spin; the boat began to move. She swam powerfully to the surface and gulped a huge mouthful of air, then clamping her gills shut and holding her head out of the water, she forced the air back out between her lips.

"Timmy!" she shouted. "Don't go! You heard me! You understood! Thank you! My dear boy, you understood! Come back!"

Timmy and Dad turned and saw her. They were astonished at the impossibility of what they were experiencing. They beamed with delight. Dad turned off the engine.

She swam to the stern of the boat.

"Dad! Timmy! Don't go! You are the only real family I have!"

Father and son exchanged looks of delight.

Then Dad said, "Come home with us Number 10. We live close to the water and there are some big caves under the bank near our dock. They'd be perfect for you."

"Please say yes, Number 10," Timmy begged.

Without hesitation Number 10 agreed and they all set off for the air creatures' cabin and Number 10's new home in the caverns close to her new family.

Then, as Dad steered the boat toward the opposite shore, Timmy said, "Dad?"

"Yeah, Son?"

"I guess most anything is possible, isn't it?"

It was more a statement than a question.

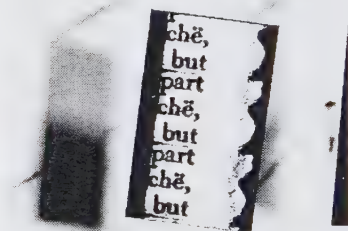
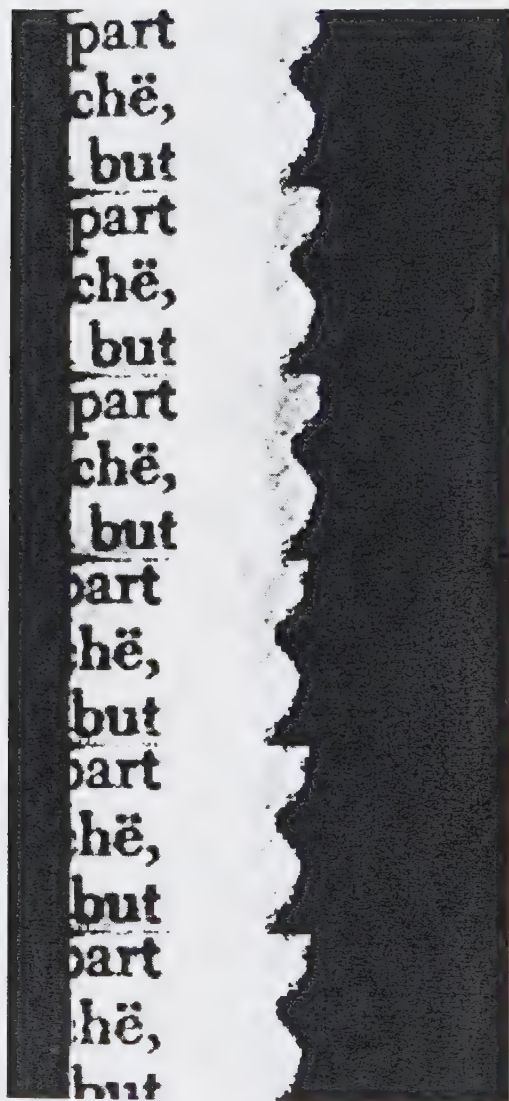
"Yeah," Dad said. "I guess so."

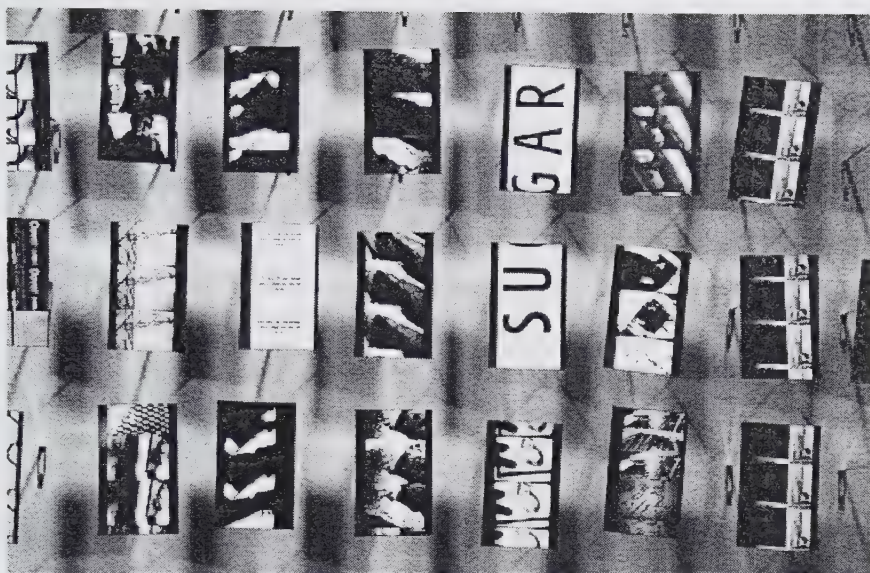
"Dad?"

"Yeah, Son. What is it?"

"I'm not afraid anymore."

Pioneers and their
children lie buried beneath
15th Street in rotted wood
coffins, their bones by now
washed smooth like driftwood
sticks along the river, pale
memories of what came before.
When the road was built
workmen tied their horses
along the path, using language
to make even sailors blush,
though in those days it never
did: everyone in town was a sailor
speaking in the voice of the
drowned. Horse-drawn scrapers
evened the grade and leveled
the old forest floor, passing gravely
through fir stumps and old bones,
though even now when it rains,
casket handles and nameplates
wash up in mole hills to remind
us who used to live here on the
shoulder of the town.





BIGGEST ONE YET

Robert Michael Pyle

Every year the waters rise—
the river floods, the rivers flood—
all over the Maritime Northwest. All
the old houses along the banks of the Gray's
lie in rot, long abandoned,
though some fond fools still build
where the water is sure to follow.

This one was big. The rain
kept up on the warm west wind
from Hawaii, the number ten tides
up the Columbia refluxed all the tribes.
Covered Bridge Road closed first,
four feet under water and silt,
then Loop Road, then the highway,
at Hull Creek and Seal Slough.
No one went anywhere unless
on logging roads through the hills.

Houses flooded that never have,
new subdivisions floated off their pads,
a gambreled home came down the Toutle
like a bobber. In our house, a tailless
salamander called ensatina showed up
in the cellar for a second time, coming
in through the porous walls beside
the burping sump pump

Down below our river bench, the Gray's ran
brown and bloated, taking back its entire valley,
and logs shot by just inches below the covered
bridge's bottom. When the water dropped,
mud was what remained. Mud, and a thousand
mew gulls, settled on the sodden fields, gleaners
of what the floods suck out of the earth, and lay
back down for next time.

THREE A.M. AT THE ALL-NIGHT LOGGING SHOW

Robert Michael Pyle

Well, okay, not really *all* night. But this operation starts up around two in the morning, shuts down early. We're used to logging around here. The ragged little mountain these guys are relieving of its alder has been logged before, and the next patch over will go next year. The hill across the creek, last cut before I came here in '78, will be felled again in ten or fifteen years, I'd guess. For pulp—this stuff I'm writing on. Loggers always go

to work early, stepped into their clammy, staggered-off jeans about the time I turn in some nights. It's not unusual to hear their whistle-bugs pipe up at six, and the first loads grumble down the road before dawn. But this logging in the middle of the night is a new one on me: the sharp bleats of the bug and the back-up beeps, the bass thrum of the cables and a higher whine of chokers; the diesel growl of the cutter-loader, the scrape of the carriage, and when they buck, the urgent howl of the chainsaws. The spotlights in the window.

They make a mess of sleep, the all-night loggers. Out where working in the face-slapping rain, the limb-whipping wind, the frigid fog. I shiver, pull the blanket higher, turn back into my ragged dreams.

THE PROBLEM WITH FOLLOWING DEER TRAILS WHEN LOST

Scott Starbuck

is they almost never take you
to Burger King.

They can go straight uphill
and straight down.

Deer also like circles,
figure eights and spirals.

They don't care if you get home
by five or February.



CONTOUR
Susan Rhoads

"A dreadfully fatal intermittent fever broke out in the lower parts of this river about eleven weeks ago [late July] which has depopulated the country. Villages which afforded from one to two hundred effective warriors are totally gone, not a soul remains. The houses are empty and flocks of famished dogs are howling about while dead bodies lie strewn in every direction on the sands of the river."

— Scottish Botanist David Douglas, 1832, qtd. in Center for Columbia River History

What if visitors from another country
brought diseases
and we became so delirious with fever
thousands of us entered the Willamette River
to cool off, lining the muddy banks
with our dead bodies?

What if, instead of helping,
late visitors
gave thanks for our deaths,
called our frightened orphans savages,
said we were unworthy of this valley
and sent us away on trains?

What if our displaced children
were scolded for speaking English,
taught the Bible was worthless
to be forgotten and replaced
with their views of God?

Would the few of us who survived
have a right to live our culture,
to remember what happened
and tell it openly,
to gather salmon from our rivers and streams?

(Summer, 1925)

Me and Billy and Joe made the best house up in the big cottonwood tree in my yard. Well, it is mostly my yard, but some of it hangs in Joe's yard too. Anyway, we got some boards from my dad and Billy's dad and nailed them together for a platform. It was some job. It took us days to get it right – you know, just the right size. When we finished, we could hardly lift it. That took some strength to get it up next to the tree and then we rigged up a pulley and pulled it up in place. A couple of times we dropped it, once it was Billy's fault for letting go, but, finally, we got it up there. We nailed it down to a couple of branches. And then just admired it. Swell! Really swell! We got some apple boxes from Mr. Riley's store for sittin'. They had to be nailed down on account of the floor slanted pretty bad.

We decided to have a club – The Boy's Club – we thought that name up ourselves cause we didn't want any girls to belong, and that made it definite. I was the president and had the biggest box to sit on and keep my things in. Billy was the secretary, and Joe was the treasurer, only we never figured out how to collect dues. Anyway, we made the rules for the club, and Billy had to write them all down. He can't spell very well, so it took a long time. It was important to get the rules just right, and we kept changing them until they were. Billy complained a lot, but he finally agreed that it had to be done that way.

The first rule was easy. No girls. The second was that we would have a meeting every Saturday morning at 10 o'clock. That was the easy part. The rest were hard because we couldn't always agree, like the one about swearing. I thought we could practice swearing in the club house, you know, just kind of test it out. Billy said there was no swearing at his dad's club. He had heard him say so. Joe was afraid we would get too loud and someone would hear us down below.

We went on to the smoking issue. Joe said, "No smoking." Billy and me wanted to keep that open – you know, smoke when we could steal some tobacco and cigarette papers from our dads. Joe was afraid we would get caught. He is so wimpy! But like me and Billy said, "What's the use of a secret club is if we can't do anything secret?"

We sat up there in that tree half the summer looking down on the back yards, and talking and planning and listening to Duke, my dog, bark and whine because he couldn't come up. Dogs aren't good in trees, so i wouldn't let him. Some days he got so aggravating, I just climbed down and took him in the house and locked him in the basement.

Anyway, we finally got everything arranged and written down. We decided we could

each swear once a day, and on some Saturday, we'd smoke, only we couldn't decide which Saturday.

Everything was going fine until one day Joe climbed up to our lodge and brought Jodie, his little sister. Boy, were me and Billy mad! Joe said it wasn't like he was bringing a real girl, it was only his sister, and his mother made him take her along for the morning. Jodie said that half the tree hung in her yard, so she had a right to be there.

Well, that sure spoiled it all. Here he broke rule number one, plus showed her our secret place. It was Saturday and we couldn't have a meeting with her there. So rule number two got broken. Everyone got mad and Jodie started crying – girls are such sissies – and Joe had to take her home. Then Billy's mother called him home, somethin' about his grandma visiting. The whole day was ruined.

That night, after I was in bed, the storm hit. Bad, bad wind and rain and lightening. I heard the crack, and sprang up, but I couldn't see what happened. The next morning, I ran outside and there laid our tree house on the ground, broke. The branch that it had been nailed to was hit by the lightening and split.

So that ended that adventure. I got to admit though, I was getting tired of sitting up there every day. Some of the other kids had a baseball team going, and I wanted to pitch.



INK WASH
Luis Gomez

Some cats actually enjoy being bathed. My friend Bruce Archibald, owner of Unique Petique Pet Supplies in Long Beach, Washington, once told me how he successfully bathed his cat, Fluffy.

Bruce recounted how his curious kitty had batted some bubbles in the bathtub water and how he had gently lowered his blue-eyed beauty into the tub. All went well, he assured me, until he had to chase the critter around the living room with a blow dryer, equipped with only a four foot cord.

Inspired by Bruce's story, I recently decided that my two-year-old Siamese mix, Oscar, should also be "cleaned." He had rolled in something stinky and smelled like an ocean side port-a-potty.

But, I wondered, how do I do it? First I checked out a copy of Complete Cat Care Manual by Andrew Edney – B.V.M.M.R.C.V.S. Armed with those impressive initials, Edney offers a "simple" seven-step procedure for bathing a cat.

"Make sure you get everything ready beforehand," he advises. Further: "You may need to enlist the aid of an assistant who can help you keep the cat calm and reassure it while it is being bathed." (Sure. Right.)

Step four urges cat custodians to "handle the cat firmly but gently. A cat does not like getting his fur wet and may try to scratch or bite. Talk to the cat to reassure it." (That word "reassure" kept popping up and was starting to bother me.) Under step seven, Edney declares: "If the cat is not frightened, dry it thoroughly with a hairdryer." (Now the word "If" was starting to bother me.)

Since option one seemed a bit scary, I pursued option two – purchasing helpful items to alleviate hazardous duty. I found a pricey item in the R. C. Steel Pet Supplies catalog, the Bath 'n Carry – a "pet-friendly restraint [that] comfortably slips over your cat to secure him without trauma." Something that could safely immobilize Oscar.

Bruce's store also afforded some useful "backup" items. I could purchase a bottle of Quick 'n Easy Cat and Kitten Shampoo that didn't require cat dipping. Or Quick Bath with its five pre-moistened wipes. Possibly a Quick-fit Muzzle. Or maybe some stress-reduction pills for Oscar (or me).

But it was option three that won out. Always one to savor new adventures, I opted to bathe Oscar the old-fashioned way – shampoo and water, in the shower.

Weighing the situation, I concluded that Oscar had the advantage of quickness, cunning, claws that can remove all skin from my body, and a lack of concern for human life. I

had the element of surprise, strength, and the advantage of battlefield selection.

So I chose a fairly large bathroom with a shower enclosed by a sturdy glass door. I needed a small manageable area for the skirmish, ruling out shower curtains or other three-ply covers that cats can shred quicker than plotting politicians can shift positions.

Heeding some sound advice from Bud Herron's classic "Cat Bathing as a Martial Art," I next assembled my special wardrobe for the occasion – canvas overalls to be tucked into high-top construction boots, steel-mesh gloves, a bullet-scarred Belgian army helmet, a hockey face mask, and a long-sleeved flak jacket.

I began by nonchalantly scooping up Oscar, as if to transport him to his food dish. Since cats are seldom fashion-conscious, Oscar hardly noticed my attire.

With everything carefully laid out in the bathroom, I moved inside and, in one liquid motion, shut the bathroom door, stepped into the shower enclosure, shut the glass door, dipped Oscar in the running water, and squirted him several times with shampoo.

It's difficult to describe the next 60 seconds, since Oscar had soapy fur and no handles. He was more or less rinsing himself. It's all a blur of fur now.

Oscar then required drying – something quite simple, since Oscar was semi-permanently attached to my right leg. I dragged him out of the shower toward the electrical outlets so I could blow-dry him. Drying out just a bit and leaving a trail of smoke, Oscar scurried out of the room to hide and plot his revenge. I rinsed the blood off my face and arms, recalling that riveting scene from the film, "Psycho."

Oh well. Oscar did smell a lot better and I – I still had my pride. I'm feeling much better now. My arm scratches are fading, the red marks on my right leg are barely noticeable, and my partial hearing loss is subsiding. Looks like I've beaten the odds.

The other day, I picked up my Webster's and found mostly-negative words that started with "C-A-T." Ugly words like cataclysm, catalepsy, catapult, catastrophe, catatonia, catcall, catfight and catty seemed to describe my struggle to bathe Oscar.

Only a few words starting with "C-A-T" offer pleasant denotations. Sure, I did manage to take some pleasant catnaps after the ordeal, and my "victory" over Oscar did provide some sort of catharsis for me. But, all things considered, I'll never try to bathe Oscar again. It's too much of a Catch-22.

Carl S. from Illinois recently sent me a flattering invitation. He's compiling a book that features favorite sayings of "successful persons" – intending to inspire others and give them insights into the philosophies that help people accomplish significant tasks. Carl wants sayings that have given me comfort, kept me focused on my goals, or inspired me during my life. The sayings could be my own or passed along from another source.

Carl told me that "successful persons" like Martha Stewart, Barry Bonds, and Donald Rumsfeld have already submitted entries. While I'd like to join that illustrious company, I had to tell him I've never had one favorite saying that inspired, comforted, or focused me throughout my life.

Nor did I have any that would likely inspire someone else to lead a better life – with the possible exception of "Never pet a porcupine unless he's asleep" – a Mr. Green Jeans line from the Captain Kangaroo Show.

At different times, a variety of sayings have helped me in one way or another. As a young man, I believed in a saying my mother passed on to me: "Always wear clean underwear, so if you get in an accident and go to the hospital, you won't be embarrassed." That's still a good idea, though I might add, "and no pastel colors."

Much later, as a Chicago Cubs fan, I believed in the saying that is familiar to many other Cub fans: "You win some and you lose some, but mostly you lose some."

Then there was Grandpa Joe's favorite saying: "Never trust a Russian." He said that long before the Cold War began. When I asked my grandmother what he meant by it, she provided me with another saying: "Never trust your drunken grandfather."

My brother Jerry's favorite saying, gleaned during his stint in the Navy, was "Don't never volunteer for nothing." But, he told me, it didn't make much difference, because if you didn't volunteer, they made you do it anyway.

Early in my musical career, a wise old tenor sax player passed along a saying that helped me become thriftier. He said: "Always stash away some (deleted) money, so if you get a boss you hate, you can say '(Deleted) you' and quit." I'm still saving.

Another mentor – Uncle Henry I believe – had a saying I tried to follow: "Be nice to the other boys, even if they're mopes, because they might grow up to be your boss some day." And sure enough, several mopes did.

Some fellow teachers – tired of hearing me complain about not having anything to write about – once posted an inspirational plaque on my wall showing a little sailboat with limp sails and a man pulling some oars. It bore the words: "When there's no wind,

row.”

I later took it down and replaced it with a sign that said: “When there’s no wind, book a cabin on a cruise ship, sit by the pool, order a cool drink, and look at the babes.” Several of my friends had sayings like that, although I’m not sure what they meant.

I used to be impressed by the line John Wayne uttered in so many of his western movies: “A man’s got to do what a man’s got to do.” But when feminists heightened my social sensitivities, I realized it was a sexist saying.

They advised me I could just as well say, “A woman’s got to do what a woman’s got to do” or “A puppy’s got to do what a puppy’s got to do.” Oh, well. “That’s life” – a favorite saying of the late Frank Sinatra.

My pal Fred always tosses off this salutation when saying goodbye to friends. “Stay out of the trees, watch out for the wild goose, and take care of your hernia.” When I ask what it means, he shrugs and says: “Just do it; you won’t go wrong.” He’s right, but I’m not sure that’s advice to live by. Unless you have a hernia.

Finally, I fondly recall that inspirational line uttered by Ted Baxter (actor Ted Knight) in a memorable tribute to Chuckles the Clown on the Mary Tyler Moore Show: “A little song, a little dance, a little seltzer down your pants.” Profound.

While I appreciate the kind invitation from Carl, I don’t have anything consequential to contribute to his book. But he did give me something to write about. As I always say: “Another day, another dollar.”

A succession of dreary days
has muddled the sharp edge of optimism.

Cheerless,
damp,
unwarming,

they plod past like a soggy dog,
head drooping,

who does not pause
even to sniff wet posts.

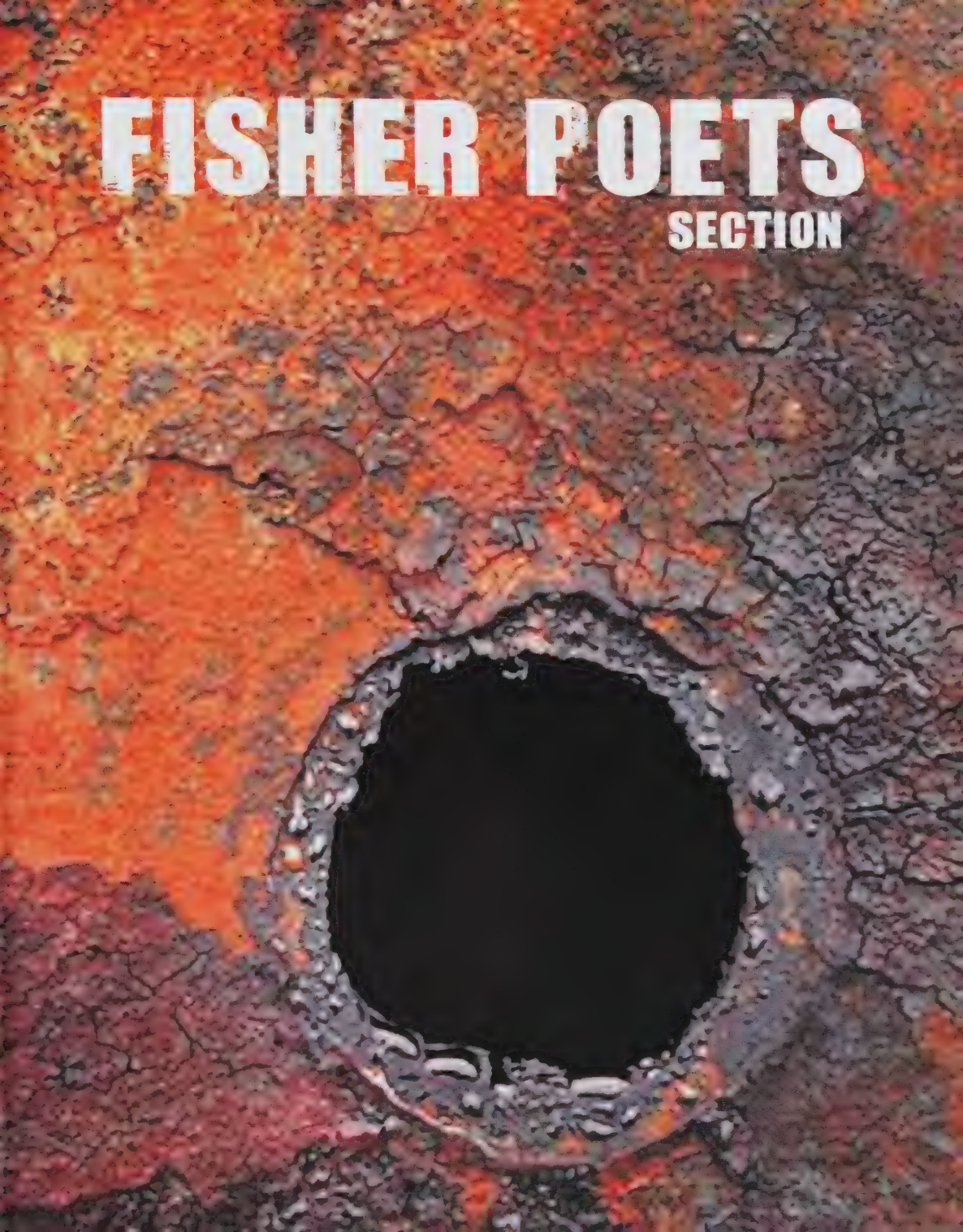
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ABSTRACT 189

Robert Brown

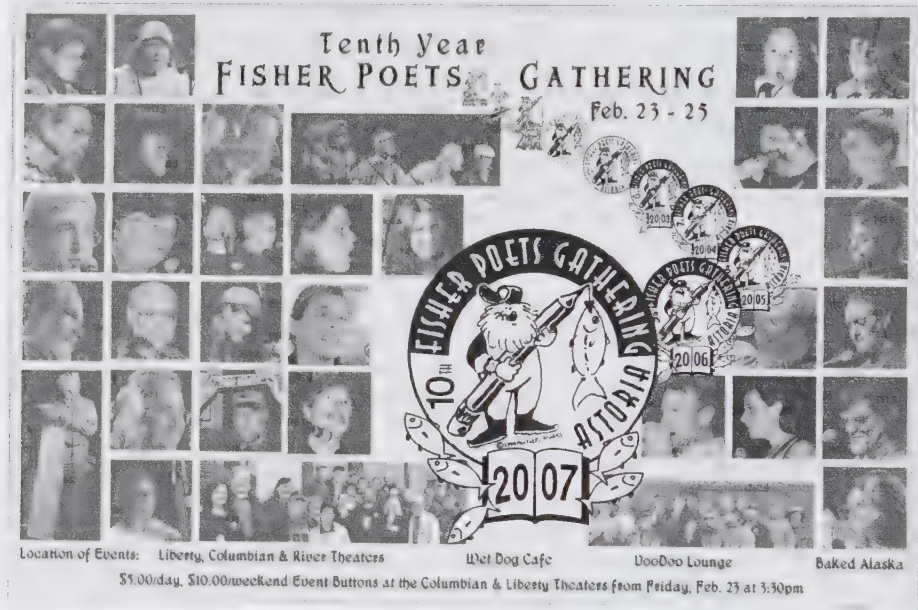
FISHER POETS

SECTION



INTRODUCTION

February 2007 marked the 10th year of Astoria's *Fisher Poets Gathering* which has been an annual event in the last full weekend of February since 1998. The gathering receives substantial support each year by Clatsop Community College, with contributions of services, goods and panel members from several local organizations and businesses. Otherwise, the Gathering is a community venture put together by a small committee of volunteers, with Jon Broderick and Florence Sage consistently and generously providing leadership. The 2007 venues included *The Wet Dog Cafe*, *Columbian Theater*, *VooDoo Room*, and the *Liberty Theater*. Major grantors have included Cannon Beach Arts Association and the Patricia Freeland Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation. KMUN Coast Community radio broadcasts the event live each year.



Commemorative Poster by Pat Dixon

This popular event has grown in audience and fame over the years and has been designated a Library of Congress Local Legacies project. More recently the Gathering has been the subject of many local, regional and national news articles and productions, including NBC's *Today Show*, *Smithsonian* magazine, and *Fisher Poets*, a feature length documentary filmed in Astoria and other sites by New York filmmaker Jen Winston. Most importantly, the Gathering is made possible by the fisher poets themselves, who gather from all over the continent to share poems, stories and songs about their unique lifestyle.

--Florence Sage and Nancy Cook

The truck's headlights lance
Through dark early morning mist.
I've long since knuckled sleep from my eye
With a hard clenched fist.

Slipped out of a sleeping house,
And quietly fired my old truck.
Nursing a steaming cup of coffee
That won't get spilled, with any luck.

Its hours yet till daylight,
When the landsmen begin to move.
By then I'll be well off-shore
Settled into the morning groove.

Parking lot is empty
Except for one quietly idling car.
Ghostly exhaust curls through its lights
Which don't seem to shine too far.

Suppose he's saying goodbye to his wife,
Who got up to bring him here.
Guess they just can't afford two rigs,
Scarce money comes too dear.

My boat is silently waiting,
An old and trusted friend.
Been doing this for so long,
Can't believe it will ever end.

I swing across a dew-damp rail,
Feel my cares just slip away.
Why I feel such a part of her
Is hard for me to say.

The engine rumbles softly,
Feels like the beating of her heart.

Check the glow of her running lights
Gleaming through the dark.

Start that first pot of coffee,
Linger a moment by stove's friendly heat.
Once again, becoming one with this boat
As I absorb the engine's beat.

The radar's glow from the wheelhouse
And the radio's soft static buzz,
Add to the feeling I'm caressing awake
A mistress that I love.

Yes, I love those early morning starts,
Though some think it much too early to show a spark.
But I love the promise of a new day
When I'm leaving in the dark.

Well, the off season can be rough,
Inactivity and short funds compound the strain.
Harsh words and harder feelings
Escalate like a runaway train.

Until finally it comes down to,
"I don't want you here no more!"
So I pack my gear, gather my stuff,
And head on out the door.

They say it's darkest before the dawn,
And that's certainly does hold true.
But there's promise in the new day,
When that young sun comes breaking through.

Well, guess I'll be living on the boat
Though that prospects not too stark,
Nothing new, just once again...,
I'm leaving in the dark.

Now there's a fever that can grip,
Hard as the one for gold.
There's nothing to do but follow through
Once you're in its hold.

I've had it long as I remember,
Some say I was born this way.
All I know, is all my life,
I've been held in its sway.

I've spent many hours staying after class,
Just feeling like a fool.
Wrote the same damn line, thousands of times:
'I won't draw boats in school.'

Stood many a watch in the corner,
'Cause I'd been caught again.
The other kids laughed, but I wouldn't accept,
Dreaming of fishing was such a sin.

Yeah, let them laugh, I didn't care,
Hell, I didn't even hear.
I was really on my flying bridge...
Making the biggest haul of the year.

Once spent a week out in the hall, where,
The teacher brought the assignments out to me.
Just because, whenever a boat started up,
I'd jump to my feet to see.

What the hell did they expect?
The school overlooked the harbor!
And for a kid with fishing fever,
No where could be harder!

It was spring, I was ten-years-old!
Fishing fever had me by the throat!
I didn't care about the ABC's.
I simply wanted on a boat.

My first boat I bought on a handshake,
When I was just thirteen.
I guess she was a rough old slab,
But I thought she was a queen!

Her ignition switch was a wire and a nail,
The engine slid forth and back,
You better have your raingear on,
If it rained while you were in the rack!

Her water tank was a wooden keg,
The stove was fired by coal,
And if the swell wasn't on the bow,
Lord, how that boat could roll!

But I didn't care, because I just knew,
That I was on my way.
And I was quick to go on the fight,
If one had something negative to say.

Well, I've had a lot of boats since then,
I suppose I really want them all.
Why, some have actually called my name,
As I walk passed their stall.

I guess I've made a lot of money,
But that didn't really seem to count.
At least I certainly hope it didn't,
'Cause it's always gone back out.

There's always a different boat, gear, or permit,
That I really need to buy.
But someday I'm going to cut back...
Though, hell, I really don't know why!



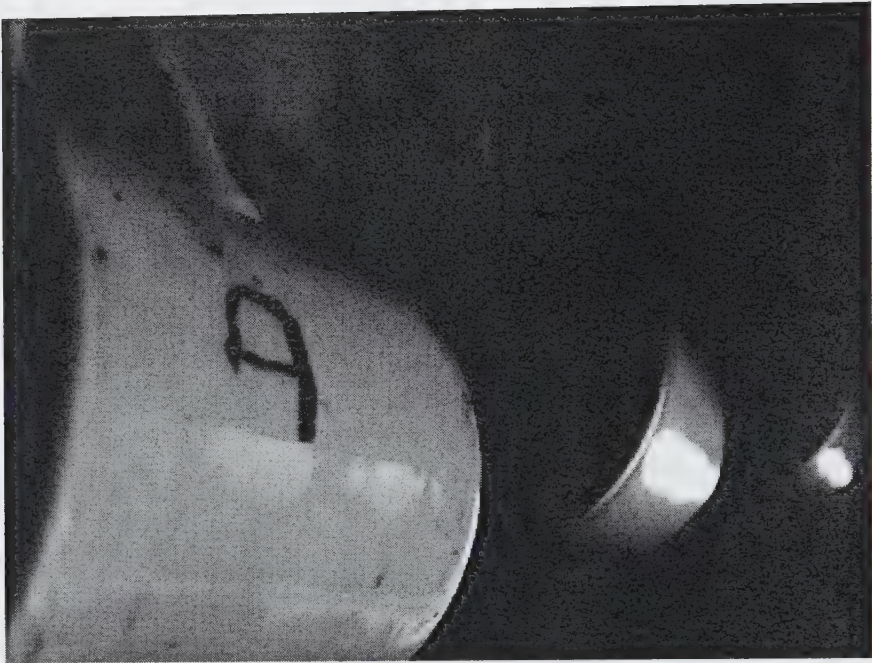
(This piece was read and sung live at the Wet Dog, Saturday February 25, 2007.)

Blue... songs are like tattoos

You know I've been to sea before Joni Mitchell

Six winters exactly, always out of Dutch Harbor except one 35 day trip way out past the Pribilofs. I've been to sea, I've paid my dues, and it's paid me. My sweet Alaska cabin is up there waiting in the snow. At first, I worked as official NMFS blue-basket domestic fish observer, but more importantly, I was observing the fishermen. I was observing characters. I was living with fishermen-characters for months at a time, in tiny metal spaces. My first contract, I bunked above a bass fisherman/turned engineer. His name was Freddie, a French-Louisianan who had more tattoos than Katrina had casualties. For me, going to sea was about living in close quarters with men so dang different from me, except our lives were tied to the same bad weather. We were drinking the same coffee day after night after day (until the coffee pot went and launched itself in a storm).

But that was a long time ago. Now I teach writing,. Now I observe my students struggle to find their voice on the page as a means of finding their way in the world. I don't work for NMFS anymore, but I do still train observers. Maybe it's no surprise my



favorite assignment is the profile. I love to write (and read) about other people. Especially Alaskan people. Writing about my rural Alaskan neighbors, I came up with a motto: "Sometimes its more important to be a character than to have character."

Tonight I'm going to read a profile about an Alaska/Oregonian guy who's both: Astoria's own Dave Densmore. You know the guy, with the inch long eyebrows and the voice that booms. It's an honor to write about "Dangerous Dave". He's welcomed both me and my *RAIN Magazine* students to his *Cold Stream* fishing vessel throughout this winter quarter. Hanging with Dave has made me remember just how important this Fisher Poets Gathering really is. Hanging with Dave has made me remember how personally indebted I feel to this Gathering. A few years ago, fifteen years in to my own Alaska adventure, a few years ago when four Fairbanks winters had totally kicked my ass, I went shopping for a new town. I had a graduate degree; I wanted a teaching job, but I also had some guidelines. I told myself I would leave the Great North for a town in the West I really wanted to live in. Lucky for me Clatsop College had an opening. And lucky for me, that job search took place in February. On the college website I read about this Fisher Poets Gathering. I thought that sounds like neat event. That sounds like a town I could really dig living in. Clatsop College was the first cover letter I wrote, and one whole paragraph talked about my experiences living and writing at sea. At my interview, I told

the Clatsop folks, "I'd love to help with that Fisher Poets committee." And here I am.

Moving to Astoria has certainly been a blessing, but there were days that first year when I missed Alaska hugely. That first fall, I was renting some rooms back behind the Home Bakery and Annie's Tavern. In the mornings, before school, I'd take my beautiful girl-dog running down at the East Mooring Basin. It was there I first met Dave Densmore. I didn't know he was fisher poet. I just knew he was a good guy. He was just being neighborly, maybe a tad bit flirty, but he made me feel so good. He made me feel familiar. Meeting Dave Densmore made this town feel like a place I wanted to live.

I imagine there's more of you out there who have that eerie familiar feeling about Dave Densmore. And it's not just because he's a newfound movie star. It's not just because he's a fisher poet who goes on national tour. It's not just because his simple poems preach truly universal truths. I've got a theory about Dave. Or actually two competing theories. Somedays I think he's a genuine real live trickster--kin to coyote and raven. And then somedays I think he's 49% trickster and 51% pure old fashioned angel. (I suspect his sweet wife Patricia has something to do with those percentages.)

At any rate, I don't want to get too religious on you, but they do say Jesus was a fisherman, and Dave Densmore's parents were actual missionaries up there where he grew up on Kodiak and the Alutians. According to Dave, the Densmores were the good kind of missionaries. They were pretty cool. His Dad never condemned anybody for anything. His family never downed nobody. They just said, "Here's the way we live, and if this looks better than the way you're living, well, we'll help you out." I like that definition of missionary. And if you use that definition of missionary, I think we could call this Fisher Poets Gathering an good old fashioned mission style revival.

Of course, Dave will claim he was a detriment to his parents' missions. He says, they had to say, "Do as I say, and not as my son does". And sure, Dave skipped his fair share of schooling. Living in the village he was more interested in shooting something fresh for his family's supper. However, the more I hang out with Dave, the more I disagree with the "Do not as he does". Dave's trickster spirit is no kind of detriment to this world. Dave Densmore spirit has a lot to teach a lot of us. And I'm gonna spice up this Dave Densmore profile with a little chant. You could call it a spiritual song. I call it my wheelwash song. I used to sing it to stay sane out there when the seas were getting lumpy. Lately I've revamped it to sing right here in this hometown:

*Halibut cheek, kittiwake beak
Been on the ocean for two straight weeks*

*Angels singing, Angels singing
In his soul, In his soul, In his soul*



*Sockeye spilling from a full purse seine
Skipper is smiling. He's got fish on the brain*

*North wind freezing up a salty spray
Looks like this lump is here to stay*

*Get out the bat, put on a warm hat
If you want to stay alive you better do it like that*

*Pribilof rising like a white bread loaves
Far away a fox chases red back voles*

*Angels Singing. Angels Singing
In his soul. In his soul. In his soul.*

* * *

If you run in to him down at Astoria East Mooring Basin, don't bother asking Dave Densmore how's he's doing. Because any day is a good day when Dave's down on his *Cold Stream* bowpicker.

Around these parts, it's not unusual to talk about a fishing vessel using the female pronoun, but not everybody shares the sensual tone Dave gets when he's talking about a lady boat. What made him fall in love with this particular *Cold Stream* mistress? He saw her first way back in 1983, but, like the romance with his high school sweetie, Patricia, it took a while for Dave to put it all together.

The wood was a big part of the attraction. Like it says on the plaque above the galley table, *If God wanted Fishermen to use fiberglass boats, why didn't he plant fiberglass trees?*

But the wood's not the whole of it. Like a good woman, the *Cold Stream* has good lines. Dave says, "I could see she was gonna be a good see boat. Oh yeah. You can look at a person and say there's somebody I want to meet, there's somebody special* and then there's some people you don't want to get anywhere near." It's the same with boats. Dave gets an instinct for them. When Dave walks onto a good fishing boat, it's like sitting with a true friend. All his troubles just melt away.

Don't bother asking Dave Densmore about his scariest moment on the *Cold Stream*. Dave's seen waves higher than the *Cold Stream's* 20 foot mast. Dave's spent days in a piece-of-shit tiny life raft. He's frozen his feet plum solid, but according to Dave, Dave doesn't get scared. He has scared his crew once and again.

Coming across from Kodiak, heading down one fall above Seward, the weather was making what they call a great circle, but the forecast was for everything laying down. "It was getting better ahead of us so I started to head off shore." That was a lie. The weather

got worse. That storm busted the *Cold Stream's* wheelhouse window.

Dave was trying to get behind Cape St. Elias, but he just couldn't get there. Seas were building fast, so he turned around and starts running for Prince William Sound. Come daylight the bilge alarm started going off. He had two skiffs on deck and a hold full of freight and nets. The *Cold Stream* was leaking real bad. The guys were going out using the deck pump. Dave wouldn't let them go by themselves. "One of you pump. The other one's just there to keep an eye on him."

So they'd go out and pump, and then they'd stay inside til the bilge alarm went off again. Dave was steering, but he couldn't hold the *Cold Stream* straight. She'd sort of lay over and slide down the swell. Then she'd straighten back up.

One of the guys comes in on a break: "Does that radio work?"

Dave says, "Yes," then, "why?"

"Don't you think we should call the Coast Guard?" asks the deck hand.

And Dave says, "Why? You think they want a weather report?"

When they got back to Cordova, one of those guys got religion and the other guy quit and flew home. Dave, meanwhile, was having fun. He had everything was under control.

You see, Dave's real plugged in with the *Cold Stream*. He has a feel for her there underneath him. Like any good trickster, Dave Densmore is comfortable with chaos (as long as he's got himself a good woman of a boat).

The first boat Dave ran was the *Last Chance*. He was nine years old. He bought the *Tiny Girl* at thirteen. He doesn't recall the price. He honestly can't remember. "I got it for a pretty good deal. Or maybe not, it probably wasn't a good deal. I was just a kid and I had to have that boat didn't matter what it cost."

Later on, he bought the *Dawn*. She was a Bristol Bay double ender. When he first saw her, the *Dawn* was so rusty, junk hanging off of it, so run-down looking, but the first time Dave walked in the galley that lady *Dawn* talked him. She said, "I'm so glad you're here to save me." For Densmore, the *Dawn* was friendliest, sweetest boat. He cleaned her up. He fished her twelve days straight; she didn't stop running once. Dave wasn't surprised. He could just feel it: how she was friendly in the galley.

Of course, like any woman, that *Dawn* could be a bit temperamental. When Dave loaned her to a buddy of his, the guy couldn't even get her to run across the bay. She broke down. Poor guy never even fished her. She (ie: the boat) plain didn't like him. Finally the guy comes to Dave. He says, "I need to bring the boat back."

Dave says, "Well bring her back." He went down to the dock, started her up. They went fishing.

Dave has been around boats his entire life. He's *always* been a fisherman. So you can imagine how ugly it was when, not long after he bought his first boat, he suffered the



misfortune of moving back East to Michigan.

After he graduated 8th grade, Dave's mom was ready to get out of Alaska. She called his dad on the two way radio from the mail boat. "Meet me in Kodiak." His Dad took the call up at the cannery. He comes back to the boat and says to Dave, "I gotta go. She's my wife, but you don't have to. You've graduated 8th grade. I want you to come with us but you don't have to."

Dave idolized his dad. He wasn't done being with him. But he hated it down there. At the high school in Michigan, Dave was just a snottosed freshman kid to everybody else. As far as he was concerned he was a man. "Hell I'd kept my family alive hunting for us when I was nine. I had a letter from the cannery that said if I'd come back up and fish for them they'd finance me a new boat." He was fifteen years old. He didn't need to be treated that way.

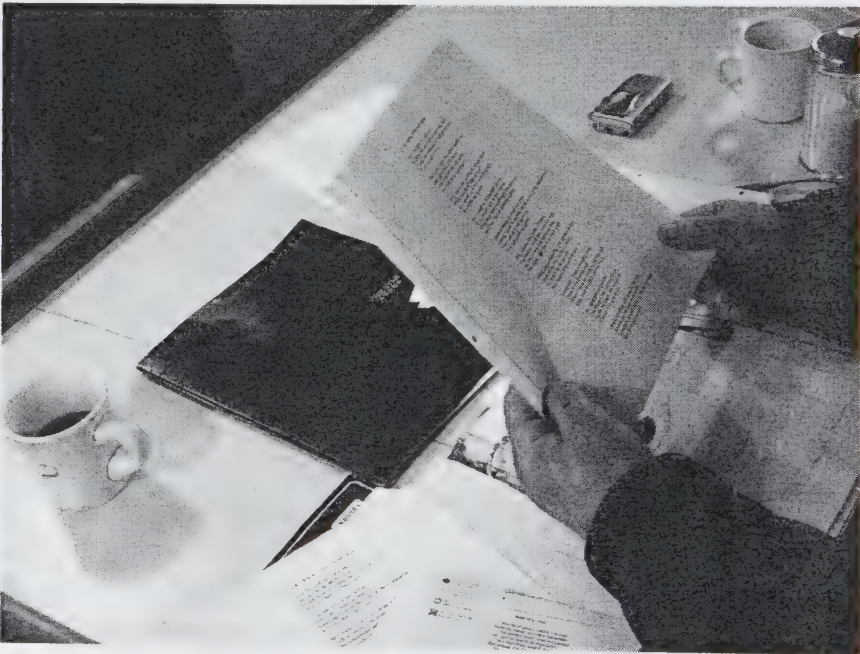
To this day, Dave Densmore does not like being told what to do. He doesn't like being dictated to. He especially hates the the federal fish agencies who tend to "adjust with a sledge hammer" a lot of jobs that require a fine finish nail. Dave doesn't like too many regulations, but he does have some rules for surviving in a life raft. He learned them and them taught em to his crew in the same short wavelength.

- 1) don't talk about food
- 2) don't talk about how thirsty you are
- 3) sure as hell don't talk about family

Dave's son Skeeter was two months old when an engine room explosion burned his crabbing vessel in the cold, cruel Bering Sea, but that didn't matter. "In a life raft, you can't think about the people you've left behind because there's nothing you can do for them and there's nothing they can do for you." Four people in the raft. That's the whole world."

There weren't any epirbs back then. They hadn't invented the survival suit. And I don't have time to tell you that whole miraculous story: how the sea anchor broke loose, how it was calm at first and they rowed like hell. Just a ¼ mile from shore when the wind picked up. At first, it was just a little puff on his face, but Dave knew it was all over. That life raft blew 150 miles offshore in three long-ass colder than steel shuck days. They were halfway to the Pribilofs when a foreign venture trawler happened to run right into them. It ran the life raft over, and that would have been the end, but there was fisherman on deck. And that fisherman was Dave's savior.

*Angels singing. Angels singing
In his soul, In his soul, In his soul.*



THE MORE YOU EAT, THE MORE YOU MAKE

Wesley "Geno" Leech

You may be a mud-sucker on a dredge down in Calcasieu
or bouncin' around in a Bristol Bay beer can like a Kangaroo
Rollin' the rails under in the Shelikoff
Or workin' up in Red Dog on the Justine Foss
Fringe Benefits? Step up to the plate...
The more you eat, the more you make

You may be a set netter up in Nushagak
or pullin' albacore tuna on a down-hill tack
If your share ain't comin' off the top
and you're more or less workin' for 'three hots and a flop';
Take the bull by the horns, throw em' on your plate;
the more you eat, the more you make

Don't be bashful, belly up to the trough
Be it Cape Blanco or the Pribilofs
You may be a Gypo tow-boater with a tandem tow
or on a Central Gulf Freighter on the roll and go
Man, stuff your cake-hole, deck-load your plate
The more you eat, the more you make

Two splits and a lift in the Willapa deep
only sleep you've had is standin' on your feet
The weather's turned sour, the skipper's half baked
The frostins' done melted right offa' your cake
Can't plug the boat? Keep pluggin' your plate
the more you eat, the more you make

Globetrotter or troller, high seas high risk,
Spent half your life wallowin' in the ditch
Ain't got a 401(k) or retirement plan,
but you've got a knife and a fork and a bone-in ham
and make sure to lick both sides of the plate
The more you eat, the more you make

Used to buy em' a bump at the Brass Rail Lounge
He was busted up ol' guy from Uniontown
Had a blown hip socket
Was hunched like a question mark
Spent his life in Red Ball rubber boots
Overalls, an oil skin apron, or a freezer suit
Life beyond those slidin' cannery doors
Wasn't in the cards

Earned his jack on wet, hard, cold concrete
In the lime, the slush, and the stink
Heard the rattle and the babble
The hiss
The skid
And the roar
Handled everything that swam, or crabbed, or quivered
From Irish lords to soup fin livers
Seen June Hogs hip boot high on the fish house floor

He bagged guts for mink
Refilled borax in the men's room sink
Ran the hoist, fork lifts, monkey wagons, and a butcher knife
De-Iced shrimp
Humped cake ice
Freezer crew'd
Dumped Iodi's
Been filleted by the cold east wind
Sweat like a sauna in the summertime

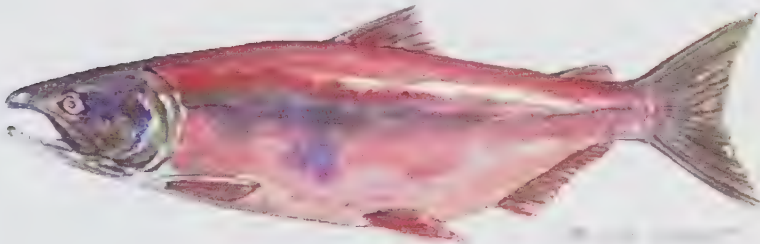
Butchered Salmon
Butchered Crab
Shoveled Dover, Rex, Rock, and Dabs
Moved by mountains of shrimp
Been tsunami'd by Albacore

Never Piss n' moaned or whined
Thrived on that steady grind
Kept punchin' that cannery clock
Like some ol' gurried father time

Worked from the stink plant in Warrenton
To Union Fish, Sebastian - Stuart, and Andersons
Till he died on his feet sharpenin' knives in the fillet room
And etched in stone out at Ocean View
Is his name and a likeness of his Red Ball Boots
And three words gouged deeper than a ditch:
Uniontown Cannery Stiff.



MALE & FEMALE SOCKEYE
- SALMON -



MALE & FEMALE SOCKEYE
Don Nisbett



COLUMBIA RIVER SALMON LABELS
courtesy of Hanthorn Cannery Foundation

My new boyfriend's not a fisherman
and it's unlikely he has ever caught a fish.
If he has, he doesn't speak of it or wear a t-shirt
with a picture of a fish.
Nothing would move my new boyfriend
to buy a little troller to fix up.
And although he spent a year in Navy training,
he could die, happily, without ever having wintered
in the Bering Sea.

My boyfriend's vehicle is not a pickup.
Underneath its seats there is no ammo
or no orange plastic gloves.
The three CDs inside his glove compartment
aren't classic rock and he has no DUIs.
In fact, the cops have never heard
of my new boyfriend.
We cross in and out of Canada without a thought.

My new boyfriend's white socks and underwear
are white. His inventory of past wounds
consists of two broken bones,
which have healed so completely
that I marvel at the unabraded skin across his face,
the way his fingers all point in one direction,
straight as matches in a book.

Inspired by "In Praise of My Sister" by Wisława Szymborska.

Beside Plympton Creek, I sat on the rocks,
shoes off, my feet in the numbing current,

the slim alders dense with new leaves, the air
cool and thick with the odor of mud and algae,

when I heard a splash upstream, rocks clacking,
and I looked to see two men holding a pole

across their shoulders, a giant salmon slung,
through a gill and out the mouth, swaying.

They were unsteady with the weight, slipping
on the creek bed, splashing ankle deep, smiling,

carrying such a load of meat, they could feed
their families for weeks, and when they neared,

I saw the waterline, up their mud-soaked jeans
and half up their shirts angled dark to light.

The salmon was mottled yellow and gray,
skin peeling, white nicks where it had struck rocks,

rotting and near death, following that last thread
of desire up the swollen stream from the Pacific,

and as they passed, splashing water,
their smiles were grimaces, and I looked away.

When steam drifts from the cold clouds
to haze the evergreen velvet slopes of the mountain,
I listen for the change, the mist that soothes
the anxious sparrows, the dampening of brittle
leaves and flaking white moss. The Pacific has erupted,
sent plumes rolling over the mountain to stifle the sun
and hue the forest twilight. The breeze carries the scent
of underlife, rich earth rising to breathe, pores of trees
and animals opening like mouths. The air is so thick
we feel the weight of rain in our bones. Within it
we hear the sky and ocean and great river valleys,
this voice breathing its unending story.



DANCING SKY, ANCHORED MOON
Pat Dixon



SALMON WATERFALL
Taryn Arnold

Patches of mist & fog rolling up together sidling
the vast wet undulation of salty swell
Early morning rare glimpse of sunlight cresting each
wave it can make it to, then swirling up again.
The satisfied seal, her curious eyes and speckled sleekness
watching the sleep-deprived hungry boats, waiting to scavenge a breakfast.
5:30 a.m. on the Copper River Delta Flats.
A lone fisherman delivers starboard his low-water set,
nerves and stomach shot to hell from a night of pounding coffee
on the pounding bar. Behind him, the fog swirls
back, rears its head to the sun
just long enough (ten minutes?)
and the white rainbow comes starboard so bright, again—
that arch of inconstant sun-dust behind him
with Seal's head surfacing at the center.
She turns to look at me, intent, grinning with delight;
both of us entranced, seductive.
I sweep the silver salmon bodies into the cold pool of the hold
with long strokes of the broom.
Over the radio a static-y voice announces
a Humpback coming our way,
Surging by Kokenhenik in the morning's midnight sun.

I. Weather

Watered tone, wind diction—

All tongues confess.

Long in the ribs, slack in the bow.

Universal language of work and wait,
of floats and fins.

Cloud letters, wave vowels, guttural ripple
pitch and roll, tongue and groove.

Wind on the mind

Wind in the face.

Wind,

the pen.

Water, the only way to move.

II. Duty

If you can't be loyal to your own life

If you can't be true to another's

You can tend to just one boat, her wave-lorn parts—

Kiss clean her sailor's mouth.

Have, as bride, her open sea.

III. History

Every inch of her a preface, a legend every bolt and plank and cleat.

Another story, every drop in the ocean.

Every hand, a living sacrifice—

their tall-masted tales, driven towards dawn.

With worlds below deck, & not all gods above.

Can you hear them? The ships, floating

Through every era, towards every port.

Their main catch myths, their by-catch mortals.

The smoke brought a crab boat to our rescue: black steel, cracks in the storm windows, just back from winter in the Bering Sea. Unshaven men stood at the rail peering down at us, one of their heavy tie up lines landed on our deck, a fire extinguisher stood ready. Shouts were exchanged. No flames reported. Smiles formed in their beards. The engineer climbed down to examine our problem. His thick oil-stained hands moved with experience. He spit on deck after he talked, wiped his nose with his sleeve. His advice sounded simple, they towed us back to the harbor.

Side by side we traveled. I watched lines: taut, slack taut as our little pleasure boat tried to keep up. The unshaven men returned, took turns smoking cigarettes, watching our progress. A woman appeared, dressed like the men a black wool coat and knee-high rubber boots. Her hair danced wild around her face. She winked, gave me a gentle wave. I blushed, looked at my feet.

Before leaving us safe in the harbor, they accepted food and drinks. They told us of their season, each person adding details to the story: high winds, shallow waters, icy decks, plentiful crab and a good price. Sometimes the speaker would pause, look off over our heads, searching for the words that could make us understand living on the ocean, through the season of darkness, on the rise and fall of thirty foot waves. I surveyed the boat: contents of the window sills, slow turn of the radar, dents along the hull, orange and yellow raingear hanging from the back of the house. The woman caught me staring, motioned me closer, offered her hand from over the rail.

September 8

My old crew calls. They know I've been laid off. They know I'm depressed. I don't return phone calls. Dirty dishes and laundry are taking over my house. The rumors suggest I can make some money fishing. They'll buy my plane ticket. I'm having the usual feelings of not fitting in where I am. I clean out the fridge, pack up my dog and cats, apologize to my tomato plants, ask a neighbor to collect my mail.

September 9

I'm selected for extra security searches. My backpack is suspect. I'm called into a small room and asked if it's OK to open it. I'm told to stand back and not touch anything while the search takes place. I wish I wasn't wearing a black leather coat. The security guard laughs. Fisherman's rubber boots always set off the alarm. She shrugs and smiles.

The plane drops out of the clouds over a sea of white caps. There is a collective gulp in the cabin. We roll side-to-side, bank hard right and land. The Flight Attendant thanks God over the intercom and welcomes us to Ketchikan.

My crewmates wait at the luggage carousel. They're wearing rubber boots, rain is dripping from their noses, their coats are soaked through. We hug. On the ferry into town, we lock arms, I rest my head against the wall.

September 10

This is my first day fishing in Alaska in two years. My body remembers quickly. I jump on and off the net pile with ease all morning. We catch fish. Their scales are silver, this is still the beginning of their return home. Fishermen are always hopeful at the beginning of a run. The scales will turn burgundy and green as they get closer to the fresh water of their streams. By late afternoon the wind comes up, the net billows like a spinaker. I wrestle it into place. The seas build, I lean towards the center of the boat. Rain pelts my back. I have a jellyfish sting under my right eye. We fish until dark. Kneeling on the back deck, I fillet a Coho while holding a flashlight in my mouth. I rub olive oil, garlic, spike, fennel, black and red pepper into the meat. Rice steams the galley windows. We eat dinner after 9 pm. I sleep with all my clothes on.

September 11

We forget today's significance. We're frustrated that the tender scheduled to buy our fish is broken down. We drop anchor and wait. We open beers and watch the rain from the wheelhouse. We listen to the weather forecast. The automated voice announces the date. None of us attempts to tune in the news. I remember a year ago, working in

a boatyard, voices from New York surrounded us while we spread paint and varnish on a 75-year-old tugboat. By the end of the day, no one looked each other in the eye. The uncontrollable crying was starting to scare us.

September 12

A day in town: fuel, water, grub for the boat. I check my email at the public library. My friends in New York sent wishes for peace. I try to imagine how they walk through their city. What they take time to study, memorize. I watch salmon jump upstream outside the library window.

September 15

We wake to fog. Fog forces us to drink more coffee. It evolves from a weather pattern to a state of mind. We can't see beyond the confines of this boat. Efforts at movement seem useless. Caffeine might snap us out of it. I fix Zoom cereal for breakfast. We make it our mantra, Zoom, Zoom, Zoom. We are easily entertained. But the weather wins; the weather always wins in Alaska. There is so little human life here to challenge it. We adapt. We read aloud to each other from the worlds inside our books: a research biologist is led home by a pod of Orcas; an overweight journalist hikes the Appalachian Trail; a poet confesses to being a horrible bombardier in World War II. I imagine the city, weather circling the concrete looking for a way in. Here, we are defenseless. Zoom.

September 16

We listen to NOAA's continuous weather broadcast. The automated voice announces the scheduled arrival of two new automated voices. The new voices have names, Craig and Donna. Craig and Donna will broadcast the weather all across the United States. These are not the names of Tlingit fishermen in Alaska. They're not Creole tugboat skippers bucking into the Gulf of Mexico. They're not Maine lobster fisherman. They're not from the old country. Craig and Donna are white, working class, born in the suburbs. They drive Cameros. They don't belong in our wheelhouse. I miss hearing human voices over the marine radios. They relieved the sense of isolation on late night wheel watches. Even the marine operator is gone, replaced by cell phones. The Ratz Mountain Marine Operator was my favorite. He spoke in a voice just short of a twang. I pictured him with graying hair that fell over his eyes by the end of his shift. Sometimes he wore a shirt with pearl buttons. In two months, we get to vote on which automated voice we prefer: I'm casting a write-in ballot.

September 17

The weather turns northerly bringing blue sky and sunshine. The fishing is slow. We desire land. We tie our rubber raft to a loading ramp at an abandoned logging site. We

make our way over beer cans and discarded oil buckets. There are stacks of cut trees going gray in the sun. The accompanying town is built on floats. It's all for sale. At night, we watch for light in any one of the thirty buildings. Everyone has moved on. We follow a Forest Service logging road up the edge of a river valley. In the United States, the Forest Service has built eight times as many miles of road as the interstate highway system. This island boasts 3100 miles of those roads. We could walk the distance of the continental United States, but are turned back by a black bear. He's huge. I think he ate our share of salmon. I try making some noise with hopes he'll exit into the bushes. I'm nervous and my voice sounds like it came from a wounded bird. He sniffs trying to determine what kind of pathetic creatures we are. If we'd stayed, we would have heard him laughing.

September 19

I email a few friends to tell them my whereabouts: "I'm hoping to buy some writing time by doing a quick fishing trip. It feels good to be back." A response comes from a close friend in New Mexico, "I'm shaking my finger at you, you're drifting."



ERIN
Linda Townsend

September 20

I walk past cruise ships tied stem to stern along Ketchikan's waterfront. Tourists are forming lines at a variety of activities: an amphibious tour bus named, The Duck; a wagon pulled by a team of Clydesdales with Malamute seated next to the driver; a couple of cabs that make trips to Saxman Totem Park; a logging competition repeated three times daily by actors in red plaid. The longest line waits for the shuttle to Wal*Mart. They sell postcards, five for two dollars, printed in China.

September 21

The anglers are all gone from the bridge over Ketchikan Creek. A few empty beer bottles and tangled wads of microfilament line remain. I stop at low tide to see hundreds of Pink Salmon carcasses covering the rocks and pop-weed. The air is filled with a stench that would cause alarm in most cities of 20,000. I watch people's noses wrinkle in disgust but not one person bothers to cover their face. I spit repeatedly to get the smell off my tongue.

September 23

I notice the rain this morning. It's so common here I forget to appreciate it. This is the constant mist that people who live here don't consider rain at all. It has the effect of a gray wash applied to a landscape painting. Everything is a different value of gray. The Humpback's tail is a swooping dark gray arch disappearing into the ocean's gray surface, which is indistinguishable from the sky's gray. Dall's Porpoise have the darkest value, raising the ocean like moguls around our bow. A few tired Dog Salmon jump in slow circles exposing their battleship gray bellies, marking their return home. I stand on the back deck watching them. The rain falls inside the collar of my coat, trickles down my spine. The salmon continue to break the water's surface. Today's rain is a brief entrance into each other's world.

September 25

I return to the library, check email hoping for an exchange with the outside. I begin my story to a friend in Maine, "I jumped at the opportunity to make a chunk of money..." I stop. I've done this fishery four years and I've never made a chunk, enough to get by, but never a chunk. I back space to erase my deceit. I write, "I came to feed my spirit. I'll be in touch soon."

September 27

The fishing isn't what we had hoped. Once the biologists allowed for escapement, the human attempt to guarantee future runs, not many fish were left for us. The price is lower than what it was in 1978. Today is our last chance. Our first set looks good. We

have Cohos jumping in our net. I notice a small school attempting to escape over the cork line. I scream and run to the boat's rail. I lift the corks to stop the fish. "You little fuckers!" As soon as these words leave my mouth, I'm filled with shame. These fish are my counterparts in an ancient ritual. This is where we meet face to face as each other's challenge. We are both struggling to survive. Many afternoons I've watched in awe as they fill a river. Thousands of fins break the surface, move in rhythm against the current. I admire their sleek forms. I envy their ability to locate home. Today, I'm predator: they're prey. A wolf doesn't demean a rabbit before pouncing. I wish to take my words back. The fish dive and push against the netting. We start the block and haul gear as fast as possible.

September 28

We scrub the fish hold and try to enjoy the feeling of the end of the season. For many years, this day meant shots of whiskey all afternoon, a trip to the dumpster to throw away raingear, a hotel room with a deep bath tub, a haircut and some new clothes free of salmon slime. Now we spend more time looking for the northern lights, identifying birds and trying to get close to the elephant seals that pass through in the fall. Regardless of our earnings, we'll go flying in a friend's Cessna and stop at all our favorite hot springs. I remember something a fisherman told me the first year I arrived in Alaska. It hadn't rained much that summer and many of the streams were dry. There was nervous talk that the Pink Salmon runs would be permanently damaged. He smiled when he gave me his opinion, "We've had droughts before. They'll spawn in the tidal zone and the stream mouths."

September 29

We decide to try selling our fish down south. Even with the cost of processing and shipping we'll make a dollar more a pound than the cannery is willing to pay. We're encouraged by the success of a friend. He sells his fish out of a freezer van at ski resorts. He shows pictures of his boat, talks about his crew, describes the island where he fishes. He explains the impact of farmed fish on our market. He keeps his customers' names and numbers in a folder on the floor of his pickup. He promises to return next year.

September 30

We take a floatplane trip. We see Orcas, Mountain Goats, our plane's reflection in iced-over puddles when we cross a 4,000 foot ridgeline. I'm thrilled by the feeling of my stomach being pushed into my chest as we descend over the tree line and land on a lake, but what I enjoy most is watching our pilot. When she was a kid, she'd walk to the airport after school to watch planes take off and land. She worked on fishing boats until she had enough money to start her air-taxi business in Ketchikan. I study her face when she

flies, her eyes move from scanning the lake surface, to gauges on the dash, to black bears crossing muskeg. She turns tight so we can get a better view. The turn requires her immediate calculation of our weight, air speed, altitude. She doesn't flinch. There is nowhere else in the world that she should be.

October 3

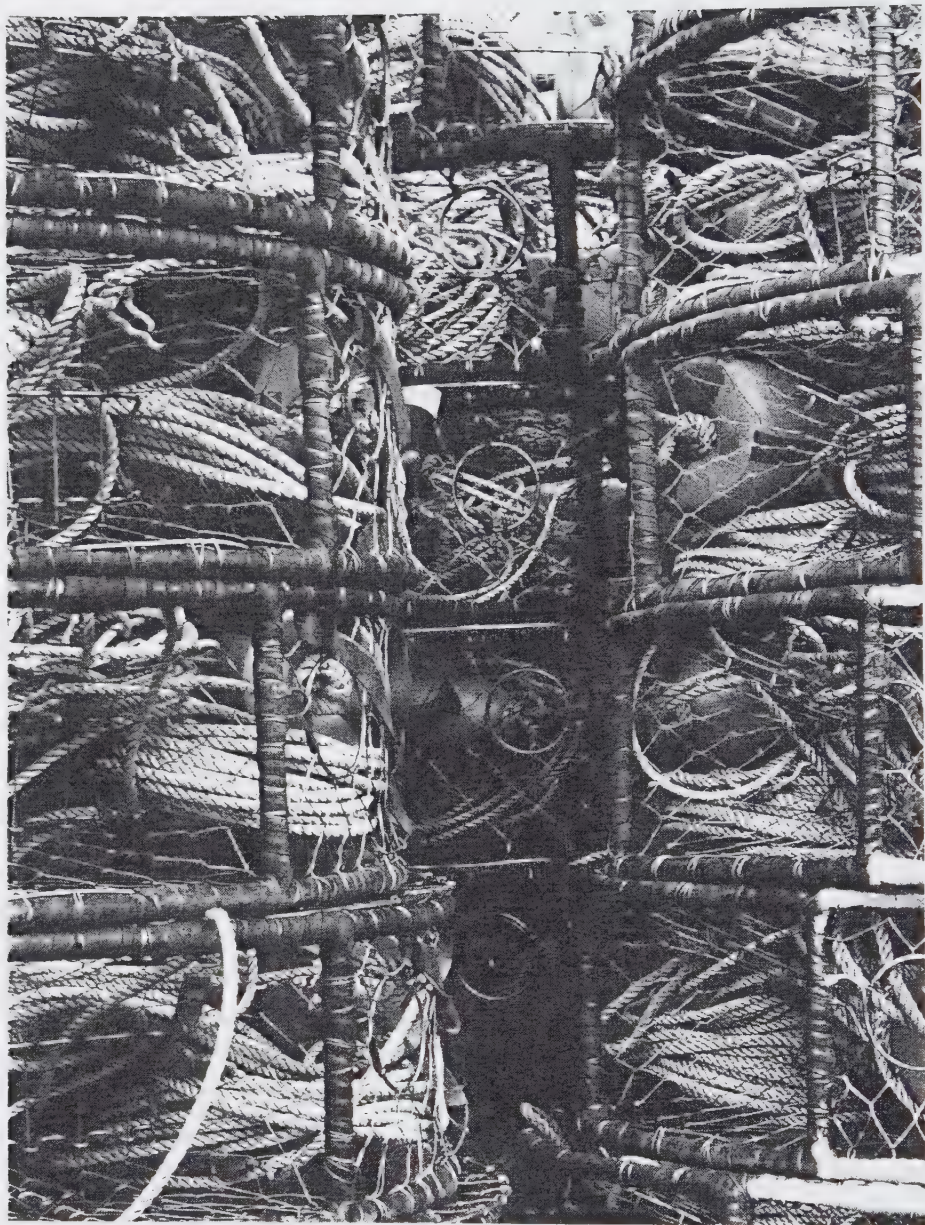
I'm relieved of my watch duty so I can write. I make a desk for myself at the galley table. From where I sit, I see only the tops of the steep hills and mountains that line Tolmie Channel. Shortly, we'll pass Boat Bluff where I usually prepare to wave at the lighthouse keepers. Sometimes they'll be having tea on one of the white porches. This is my favorite part of the trip south but I cannot get up from my writing. I see those fish fighting at the cork line. I see them dive to find another escape.

October 4

I can only think of ghost fish today. That's what we call salmon that have been up stream, spawned and washed back out to salt water. They swim aimlessly at the water's surface. They'll swim into the side of the boat. It doesn't matter anymore. Their lives are complete. They survived despite pollution, deforestation, marine predators, hungry bears and our miles of nets. When the sunlight hits them, I can see the hollows in their backs where their bodies have begun to decompose.



CORRIDOR
Pat Dixon



CRAB POTS
Fred White

At a meeting to negotiate water for salmon migration
On the Columbia River,
A phrase catches my ear:
“We’re talking about wet water here, not just paper water.”
Wet water? When was water anything but wet?
How do fish swim in water that isn’t wet,
Isn’t, so to speak, water?

Water that has currents, coolness,
That caresses blood-filled gills and
Replenishes oxygen.
Water that gives a free ride downstream to the young,
And is life’s great pathway home to the mature.
Water that slides over frozen basalt avalanches,
Left from ancient fierce volcanoes.
Water that laps at beaches, swirls among grassy banks,
And daily ebbs and flows with the push/pull of Pacific tides.

Salmon cannot speak, so let me scream it out:
“Give them the best you have – the best water.
Not just wet water, but cool water, fresh, clean,
Clear, deep and plentiful.
Don’t settle for minimum flows, upper temperature ranges,
Reduced spills, water that is chemically compromised.
Just because it’s not paper water
Doesn’t mean it’s not salmon water.”

Salmon water. Living Water. Salmon water.

I learned to fish when I became a bride.
Not from desire, but because we needed crew.
A slippery union, when salmon and love collide.

The first night out, I felt the bowpicker glide
Through choppy waves. This waterscape was new!
I learned to fish when I became a bride.

I worried over every knot I tied.
I learned new skills by imitating you.
A slippery union when salmon and love collide.

We visited haunts where fishermen had died.
I steered the boat, read charts and radar too.
I learned to fish when I became a bride.

Now boats have come and gone. We no longer ride
The "Floozy," "Dorleen," "Blue Mist," or the "Pen 2."
A slippery union when salmon and love collide.

But still we fish together, side by side.
Older, closer through the years we grew.
I learned to fish when I became a bride:
A slippery union when salmon and love collide.

"Sucker punch," Sparky shouts
As a 20 foot glaucous-colored wave hammers
The faded green and tan hull of the *Crystal May*
Sending a shudder,

A shutter along the shapely cedar spine
Of the wooden 42 foot crab boat
All the way to an exhausted fisherman's brain.
He wonders at the content of his reasoning box
After 36 long hours wrangling on deck,
Standing in place behind a steel block,
And listening to the mesh of gnarled gears
As he wrestles 700 crab pots
From sandy ocean bottom,
A bottle-green well with voice and shape.

He watches and listens
As southeast wind shifts and spirals southwest.
Shifts southwest sure as a trumpet call for trouble,
Combers now flooding the deck with dreary regularity.
Trouble, if you yanked it from a fisherman's dictionary.
Trouble
As he sees it,
Coated with white ocean spume,
Stiff as frosting on a birthday cake,
Thursday last, his 26th,
Only one of his last five that he didn't gargle a bottle of scotch.
Gave that up for Lent, and his last girl friend. They tangled like pack wolves.
Since abstinence, Sparky's called "The Saint of Dutch Harbor."

Trouble as the wind kisses ass as arrogantly as a Republican fundraiser.
Young man in tangerine-bright Helly Hansons
Can palpate change in sound,
A high prancing whistle that begins to keen
Through rigging like cries of wounded animals.

Trouble as the block gobbles 40 fathoms of polypropylene line
Faster than a baseball player can scamper to first base.

Crabbing line is baby-blue with flecks of gray,
Just like the eyes of that thin lanky redhead
He hustled the night before in the bar behind Puker's Row,
A tavern smelling of spilled fetid beer
And the stiff ammonia odor of crab.
Rancid as crankcase oil slogging in the hold
Of the sister ship, *Wave Rider*.

She's there. There,
Shotgun distance from starboard rail.
He sees the crab boat suddenly, as one vessel lifts
And the other drops into 25-foot troughs.
He glances at her through oblong brass scuppers
Just as 50 tons of sea ploughs over the transom,
Then races out those same exits, hell-bent.

He finds himself torn by undertow,
Spinning like sweat-drenched underwear
In a Sears-Roebuck washing machine.
Shouts at the skipper – to anyone within earshot.
To God above, maybe.

Shouts above two speakers stranded on the mast,
Belting out AC/DC.
He offers an epitaph with four letters
That begins with the first letter of that redhead's name.
Wasn't she a Florence, Fiona, or Francine?
Wasn't that only last night?

The "F" lady with dyed red hair,
Her body cold as ice after booze
Relaxed its sexy grip. She didn't
Like the smell of crab anyway. Didn't
Really look 27 that next morning at 4 AM,
Time for crabbin'.

Didn't. Didn't. Didn't. No, no, no.
Jesus H. Chondroitin, the world is a grab box of *trouble*.
He shouts again, "I shoulda' nabbed that job at McDonalds

When I had the chance!"
And today, he's half kidding.

Shouts above salt-speckled speakers,
Sea decay that appears like moth-white acne between rain bursts.
But he feels only the ache of the Sou'wester,
Which is cranking up to a surly 70 miles-per-hour,
As sure as the spank of a 30-30 Winchester,
Fishermen carry to kill seals.

"Get in here, Sparky," bellows the captain,
His words impotent as half the men in the Sea Hag Tavern
After six hours drinking bourbon and Coke.
Impotent as the *Crystal May*, wincing under another ocean blow,
A sucker punch that hurls another ocean comber
Like a karate chop to the solar plexus.

"I'll stick it out, Skipper. Thanks anyway. Little black cloud
And your whole day flies south." He guffaws,
Then spits a wad of chaw into the cauldron of angry sea.
Truth be told, isn't any man he respects more.

Yeah, he's cold to the bone.
Yeah, he senses reason in the skipper's offer.
Yeah, you betcha, he's proud of his rough and ready persona.
And pots are fat with crab. He's already spent his 10%.

50 crab pots and three soaking blasts later,
He can't battle the lather of surf anymore.

As he bolts into the wheelhouse,
A freak 30-footer wipes the deck clean,
Stealing tubs of sardine, clams and squid,
A refuge heap of bright tangled lines and soggy Cheetos.

Run *Crystal May*, run.
Run, run, run.
Three crab boats are stymied.
Ebb tide now, high-wheeling at eight knots,
Backing down from a nine-foot water wall at the top of the flood,
35-foot breakers on the Columbia River Bar.

Trouble, all right. They brace themselves
In the wheelhouse, and tell crappy jokes
About dumb blonds and Pollack's, while Big Jerry's voice
From the *Wave Rider* crackles over the radio. He
Loves food as much as his wife, and recites
Recipes for kielbasa and smoked salmon.

The steel-hulled bruiser *Buck Shot* sidles into the pocket of boats,
65-feet of bully, tarnished fire engine-red with a charcoal stripe
On the waterline, dark as a cormorant.

Trouble as the wind shifts into overdrive, a weather gage
On top of the wheelhouse clocking 80 MPH gusts.
Sou'wester cackling death threats while John Lee Hooker croaks,
"I'm in the mood, in the mood. I'm in the mood for love."

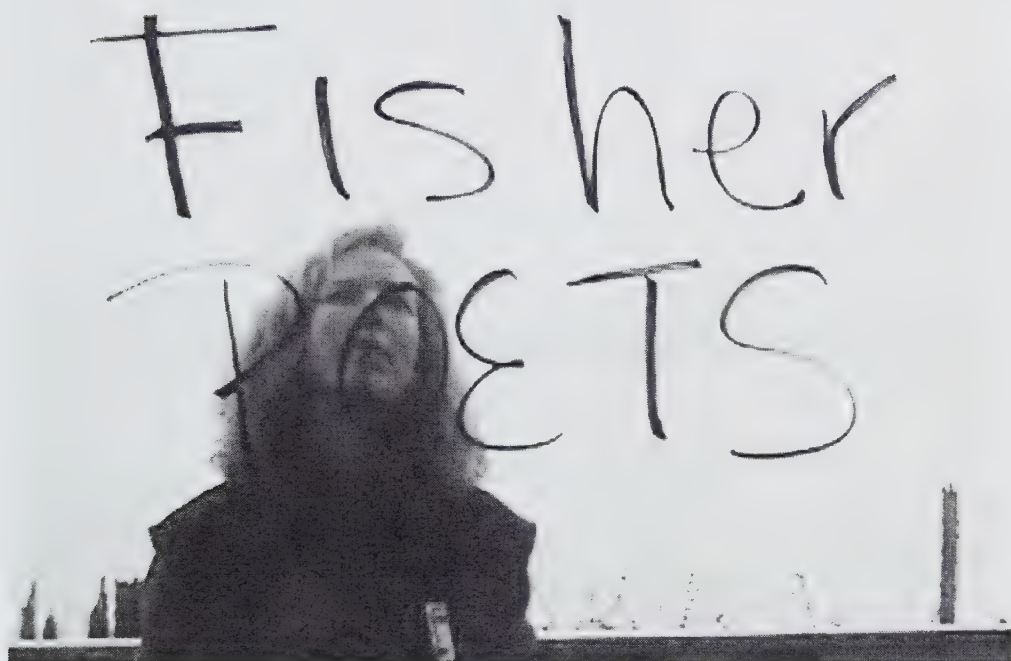
"How long until that tide change?"
That's the *Buck Shot* and everybody knows the answer, well enough.
As well as any seaman stranded in such a maelstrom.
Fisherman just wants to hear the drone of his own voice,
Kind of an extended insurance policy.
"Anyone got the score of the Sea Hawk game?
Lost'er late in the fourth."

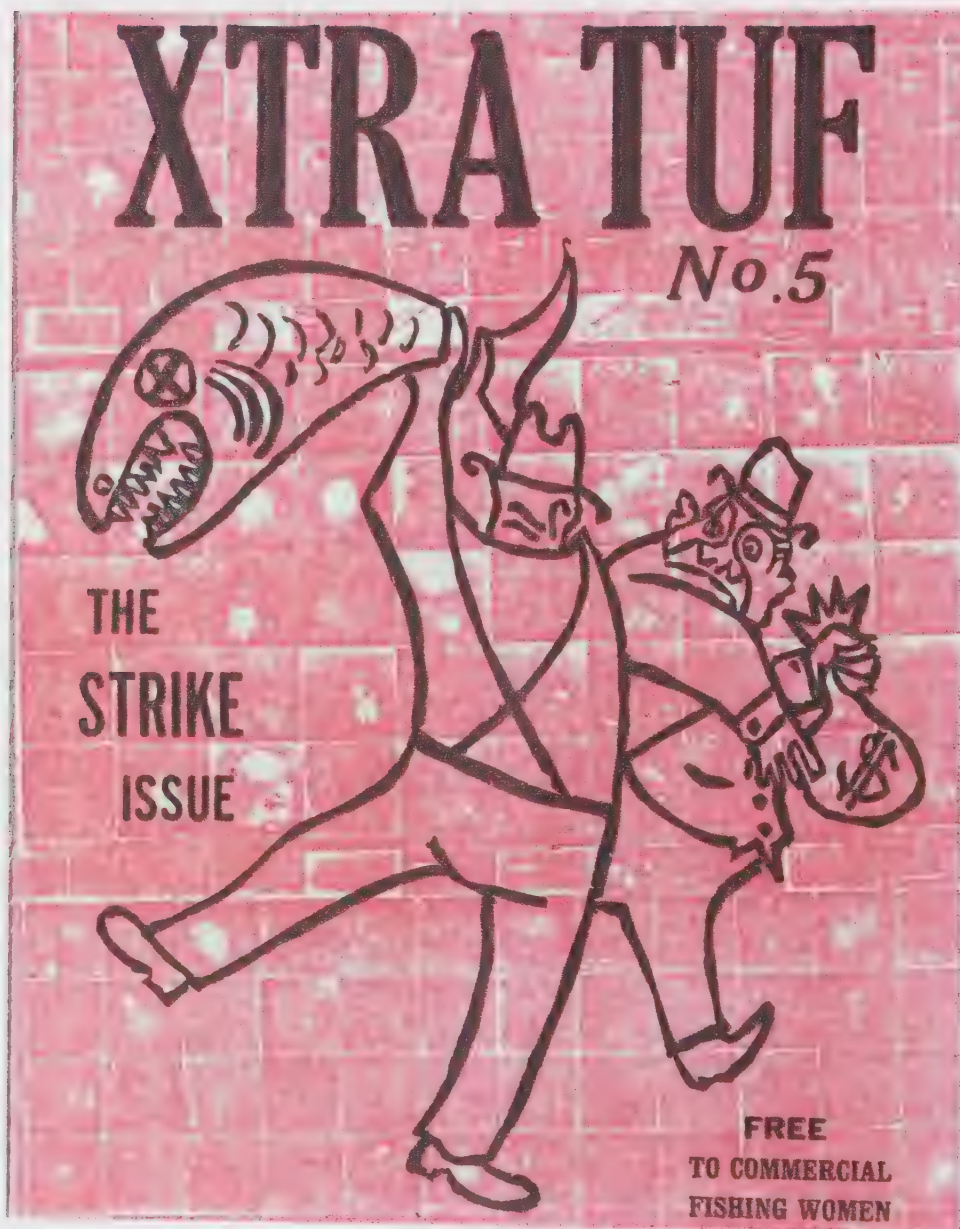
Waves tops kick lines of foam that spin-drift
Into sea hieroglyphs that only spell *trouble*.

Out of sight and mind,
Bow line snared in the propeller of the *Crystal May*.

Meanwhile the boys dream of blondes, booze, and a fat four-point buck.
Out the tinny speakers, another blues musician
Belts another line, another melody,
Another last grasp of rhythm and blues, mostly blues.
"I'm dying; I'm dying slowly, here, without you."

Sucker Punch...





There used to be a king crab season out at Attu Island, the very last, most western, almost forgotten, island in the Aleutians. It was eight days traveling from Kodiak, if you did it in a straight shot.

One year we had a kid with us, the engineer's little brother. Fresh out of Minnesota, he'd never been to Alaska, never even been to Seattle until he flew through Sea-Tac on the way up. Before we left Kodiak we laid out a chart of where we were going, the North Pacific from Southeast Alaska to Siberia. The range scale down at the bottom showed one inch = 50 miles, two thousand miles from one side to the other. We could tell none of this really meant anything to him until we got to Dutch Harbor after four days of traveling. It was still another eight hundred miles to Attu. We were only halfway there. He couldn't believe it. Inevitably, we started calling the trip "Pee Wee's Big Adventure."

He was seasick the whole time. He puked into a plastic wastebasket he kept handy in his stateroom, and he pretty much stopped eating. We told him he'd better put something liquid in his stomach to keep from dehydrating. We made him pull two hour wheelwatches like everyone else. When his relief would come up they'd find him curled in the fetal position in the pilothouse chair, an ice cube tray and a little pile of Popsicle sticks on the floor under the chair, the only things his stomach could handle. But he stayed in the chair and kept his eyes on the radar screen and the ocean ahead. He stayed awake.

When we got to Attu it was morning, very clear and cold. The island stood five miles off, white and steep in the blue sea. We put on our raingear and went out on deck and started untying pots and chopping bait. The kid stood there in his brand new Grundens raingear and Extra Tuff boots, staring into the wind at the horizon, empty but for the frozen island. The vastness of the place, the sense that nowhere else on earth was so remote, so unyielding to human intent, was overwhelming.

"Welcome to Attu," the engineer said.

"Jesus Christ," the kid said. "I am so fucked."

"You'll be okay," the engineer said. "You'll get used to it. A lot of times it's actually kind of fun. You'll see."

He handed the kid a plastic bait jar and showed him how to fill it with chopped up herring. The kid bent over the bait box with the other men and started filling the jar. They lowered a pot into the launching rack with the picking boom hook and showed him how to clip the bait jar inside the pot and get ready to set it overboard. The skipper turned the boat into the wind and spray started coming over the bow.

"You ready?" asked the engineer.

The kid looked him, snot running into his mustache.

"I guess."

The engineer pulled a lever and the steel pot rack swung up on its hinges on the bulwarks rail and tipped the pot into the sea. One of the other men threw the coils of pot line after it into the froth running beside the boat.

"So get another bait jar," the engineer said. "Two hundred and sixteen more pots to go."



SALMON
Darlene Brammer

In February we came in off the Slime Banks into Akutan Bay to deliver our tanner crab load to the Deep Sea. The processing ship lay in the middle of the bay, a small dense object on the radar screen ten minutes before we first could see the glow of her decklights through the fog, and then, closing from a hundred yards, the details of bristling masts and booms, the dark slab of hull in the greasy water.

There were about thirty processing workers and deckhands on the Deep Sea. For everyone, both us and them, our arrival was loaded with social possibility, the chance to talk to people other than the people we all had been alone with for weeks. For Dean and Bill and I on the Calista Sea, knowing there were girls aboard made tying up to the Deep Sea electric with sexual possibility.

Bundled in the same wool and raingear as the men, the faces of the half dozen Deep Sea girls stared at us as we pulled up. Usually these girls were just ordinary girls, rendered more attractive by their relative scarcity. But this time we saw that one of the girls leaning over the rail was strikingly beautiful, with a delicate chin and blonde hair. And when Dean went up and talked to her she asked if we needed a cook. A few hours before we untied she came across with her suitcase and climbed down the ladder onto our deck. The processing foreman on the Deep Sea glowered from the wheelhouse above us, but she grinned defiantly back at him and waved at the other people standing at the rails, a prisoner escaping, waving at the inmates left behind. She threw her suitcase on the other bunk in my stateroom and explored the galley like a cat in a new house, opening cupboard doors and looking in the refrigerator. We showed her the storage locker in the forepeak and the walk-in freezer. She chattered about how horrendous life had been on the Deep Sea, about living with five other girls in a tiny stateroom, about the foreman constantly asking her to come down to his stateroom, about the bad food, the once a week showers, the broken clothes dryer.

We listened quietly and stared at her as if she was an exotic animal. She was nineteen and delicately beautiful, and she knew she was beautiful, had always known that, and she moved inside a bubble the rest of us watched like voyeurs, and all of us, she and us together, were exquisitely aware of this watching. We could feel it vibrating in the air, and the tension of it stretched between all of us. A shuffling of relationships began between Dean and Bill and I and Gary, the skipper, even before we untied from the Deep Sea.

Bill and Dean slept in one stateroom and Elaine and I slept in the other. Nothing went on between Elaine and me, for as much as I thought about it, I was shy about cross-

ing the boundary from shipmate to bunkmate, and I wondered too what might happen to the equilibrium between Gary and Dean and Bill and I in the event of one or the other of us getting involved with this girl. I wondered about the risk of jeopardizing the rest of the season, of one or some of having to leave the boat over this girl. I didn't want to lose a crab season. Dean fell immediately and obviously in thrall with her while she chatted about her high school friends back home in Edmonds, her dog, her dentist father, but for her part, Elaine seemed happy to simply be the cook and an equal friend to all of us, and as much as Dean was obviously smitten with her, she kept a certain distance between herself and him.

Bill and Gary and I watched Dean when he was in the presence of Elaine until one night while Elaine and I slept in our separate bunks, Bill came down from his watch in the wheelhouse and shut the door to our stateroom. We rarely shut the doors to the rooms and when Bill got Dean up for his watch, he said nothing, and let Dean come to his own conclusions about the closed door and what that might mean about Elaine's and my sleeping arrangements.

In the morning Elaine seemed unaware of what the closed door might mean in the sign language of the boat, but Dean immediately saw it as evidence of an affair between me and the Elaine, and his torture became painfully apparent. At first Bill and Gary and I thought this was a good joke, but after a few days it seemed cruel and after that I kept the door open. Within a week or so we all knew none of us would be sleeping with her, that the possibilities for emotional disaster were too immediate and inherent in the situation for any kind of sex between any of us and Elaine. And in a way it seemed that we all were secretly relieved that the social dynamic had settled into stasis again. But at night I looked at Elaine sleeping in her bunk across the stateroom and I thought about what the possibilities in Seattle might be after the season, away from the narrow bunks and the open doors.

* * *

Elaine couldn't cook. She tried and failed to make rice in the microwave, couldn't get the vegetables and the potatoes and the meat to come out done at the same time, served chicken black on the outside and frozen in the middle. We didn't care. She was a distraction from the work and the ocean and each other, and she was always unremittingly cheerful. In some genuine place inside herself life was good and everyone in the world was as beautiful as she was and we loved her for that.

One morning she burst out on deck carrying a tray of half burnt chocolate chop cookies in one hand and a cheap plastic camera in the other, the smell of the cookies enveloping us in a warm cloud of chocolate and grease. Gary called down on the loudhailer

and said we could take a break, we had twenty minute run to the next string.

Elaine put the cookies on the bait table and began taking pictures of the seagulls floating in the air off the stern, the crab pots on deck, and us, clowning with crabs and codfish and writhing octopi and cookies in our gloved hands, grinning, our backs to the empty oceanic horizon. I looked at her and understood suddenly that she was seeing the world as we had all seen it once, as we still saw it in those moments of transcendent clarity when we weren't dully counting the pots left in the string and the hours remaining until we could eat and crawl back into our bunks. In the smell of the cookies and the joy in Elaine's face I saw again the sea and the sky and this life, revealed, sacred and whole.

The moment lingered and I knew I would remember her as she put the camera to her eye and told us to smile. I didn't have the heart to tell her that the golden thing she was seeing, the natural majesty around us, would not translate through the lens into something she could carry away from the Bering Sea to show the people back home. I knew the pictures would come back from the lab with some sky, some ocean, a few birds, some scraggly hollow eyed guys in raingear, static images not much worth looking at. The people she would show them too would riffle through them and put them aside, wondering what the big deal was. I knew this because we had all taken those pictures ourselves once, and had long ago come to accept that the feel of the wind on our faces, the smell of cookies and diesel smoke and morning ocean tang, the sublime aliveness of it all, would remain in place, unreachable even an hour from now except in memory or dreams, and none of it would ever be entirely explainable to anyone who had not been there with us. We watched her taking the pictures and we held up our cookies and tried to look heroic and didn't say what we knew, and were silent in our knowledge that eventually she would know it too.

* * *

One night after we had come into Akutan Bay to unload to the Deep Sea, we skiffed across the bay to the village. Akutan, a community of three hundred people and no other cultural amenities, featured a bar, named, despite the total lack of any roads on the island, the Roadhouse. That winter the Roadhouse featured two kinds of alcohol- Gallo red wine, and Carling Black Label beer. Gary and Bill and I stuck with the beer. Dean and Elaine drank the wine.

We drank until early in the morning, the jukebox roaring with Credence Clearwater Revival and Jimmy Buffet, a few villagers watching from their barstools as we danced with Elaine and pounded on the jukebox in time to the music. When we stumbled down the hill to the dock and climbed into the skiff to go back to the boat, Dean was slurring and Elaine was reduced to giggling. By the time we got her into the bench seat around the gal-

ley table she was entirely unconscious and in the blue fluorescent glow of the galley light her skin was pale, her delicate eyelashes wet with rain. Bill and Dean climbed into their bunks and Gary went upstairs to his captain's stateroom and I could hear him moving around up there, bumping into walls and slamming doors. I carried Elaine into her bunk. A few minutes later Gary came bumping down into the galley and stood in the doorway to our stateroom, holding onto the doorframe keep from pitching onto the floor. He stared into the darkness of our room and then he lurched into the room and stood beside Elaine's bunk, leaning against the top bunk over her. She was lying face up, her mouth open, one arm wrapped around the top of her head, the other hanging out of the bunk. She was snoring softly.

"Hey Gary," I said. "What's going on?"

He looked over his shoulder at me.

"Shit. Mind your own business. Go back to sleep."

He picked Elaine's arm up and put it inside the sill of the bunk and then he sat on the edge of her bunk and leaned over her, one arm braced against her pillow.

"Hey Gary. You better be cool," I said.

"Fuck you. Go back to sleep," he said.

I started getting out of my bunk.

"Ah, fuck it. Never mind," Gary said, and he lurched out of the bunk and into the galley and up the stairs. He banged around up in his room for a few minutes and then it was quiet. I laid awake for awhile listening to the water against the hull and to Elaine snuffling in her bunk. Neither Gary nor I ever acknowledged the incident to each other, and I never said anything to Elaine.

* * *

Elaine stayed on board for a month and then our regular cook came back and Elaine flew out of Dutch and home. A letter came. It didn't say much, just a hello and "I hope your old cook is feeding you good." A couple more letters came addressed to Dean; we saw the envelopes on the galley table after Gary brought them back from the fuel dock office, but Dean squirreled them away as soon as he got them and we never knew what they said. When we got back to Kodiak in June I got off the boat and the other guys kept sailing south, to the shipyard in Seattle. The plan was for me to fly down in July and then we'd all help get the boat ready for the Bering Sea king crab season in September. On the way down, Gary and Bill and Dean tied the boat up to the city dock in Ketchikan and went uptown to get drunk. They ended up in different bars. At some point in the afternoon Dean went back to the boat, pumped out one of the crab tanks and opened an inspection plate over the shaft running under the bottom of the tank in order to take a look at

the intermediate shaft coupling. He left the inspection plate open and went back uptown. Gary came down an hour later and not realizing Dean had left the plate open, opened the valves to flood the tank to ballast the boat for the last leg of the trip to Seattle. He looked down into the tank to make sure it was filling, and went back to his bar. The plan was to leave in the morning. The water in the tank flowed into the open inspection plate and through the shaft alley into the engine room. Within half an hour minutes the water had filled the engine room enough to kill the auxiliary generator engine. The deck lights dimmed and died. The bow was way down. Somebody called the Coast Guard and they rushed down with pumps and kept the boat afloat while a shore patrol went looking for the crew. It was a bad scene. Gary and Bill and Dean were all drunk, standing on the dock being questioned by the Coast Guard. The boat didn't sink but the engines were totaled. The company that owned the boat fired them all, and me besides, and hired a new crew to fly up and take over the boat.

When I flew down in July I knew only the barest outlines of this. Dean met me at Sea-Tac. We went looking for food and beer and he told me I was out of a crab job. I considered that and then I asked him the question I'd been thinking about since I'd gotten off the boat in Kodiak.

"So what's up with Elaine? You seen here?"

We were driving north on I-5, going past the Boeing plant, the wings of the aircraft parked outside glinting in the sunshine, the traffic on the freeway getting heavy. He had his right hand wrist draped across the top of the steering wheel and didn't say anything for a minute. He kept his eyes on the car in front of us.

"I called her house when we got down here in June. Her dad told me she got killed in a car crash in May. She was drunk and went off the freeway. There was big funeral." I stared out at the guardrails going by, the vertical lines of the stanchions flickering in the late afternoon light like crab boat masts across a mile of empty water.

We spent the week I was in Seattle snorting coke and drinking and hanging out at Dean's house with a parade of crab fishermen and drug dealers and girls whose names we forgot the next day. We talked once about going up to see Elaine's parents, or going to the cemetery to look at the grave, and I think maybe Dean did go to the cemetery after I left, but I never made it, and we never went to see Elaine's folks. We kept saying, "tomorrow," but then we were too high, or hungover, or busy with something else, and in the back of my mind I knew I didn't want to see any graves or face her parents. In the end it was simply easier to keep putting it off, to remain anonymous to them, to be an unidentified part of the strange and unknown life Elaine had lived for three months when she had left them at the airport and flown off Alaska. In those days, I still knew nothing of the language of grief.

I used to see Dean in Dutch Harbor sometimes in the last years before I stopped going out to the Bering Sea. One night we stood in the rain-wet grass in back of the Elbow Room finishing off a tired gram of coke, talking about that winter on the Calista Sea. It was June and still broad daylight at two in the morning, and the rain fell around us, on the wooden buildings and the old Russian Church, on the crab boats tied up in Iliulik Bay. Somehow there really wasn't much to say. I think we both realized at that moment that we were too old to be standing in the rain snorting cocaine. We had lived beyond a certain event horizon in the long gone imaginings of our 20-year old minds, and the strangeness of fate hung there with us, unmentioned, unknowable, the simple fact that we had somehow survived the only thing we completely understood. Dean looked at me from under the wet bill of his hat, and a drop fell off the brim.

"I got a kid now," he said. "She's in kindergarten. What about you?"

I told him about my daughter, in first grade in the fall.

"My wife wants me to quit this shit up here and get something down there," he said.

"So I can be home. What about you? What are you going to do?"

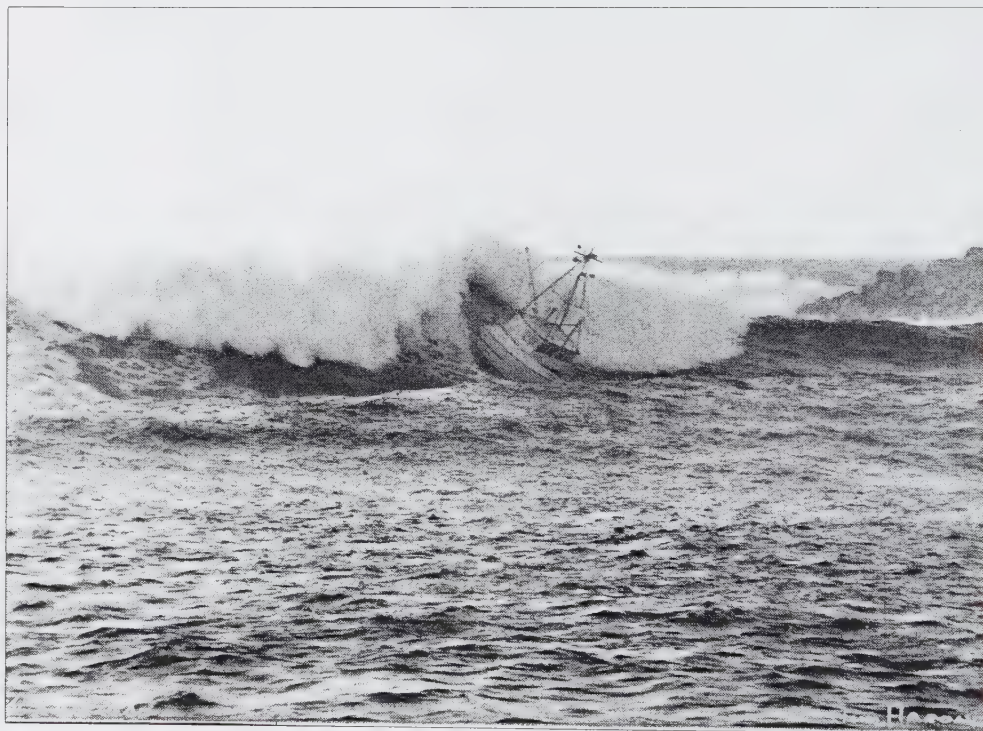
I said I didn't know.

I've wondered since if he was going to say something then about Elaine – her presence hung there with us in the grey rain with the new green grass slippery around our boots. But he didn't, and we finished up the coke and went back inside for a last beer before closing time.

For a long time after that night, and after I quit crab fishing, I actually forgot her name, as if it was just behind something in my mind, like the mountains of Akutan are sometimes hidden behind a snow squall when you come in from the Slime Banks. But then on a rainy windless afternoon in Uganik Bay, on Kodiak Island in July, something cleared away. We had picked the salmon out of the net an hour earlier and the crew guys were taking naps. My daughter was making cookies and I was sitting at the table, looking out at the water, thinking about what to do about the shredded web in the section out by the king keg buoy. The smell of the cookies filled the kitchen and in a strange transportation, I was suddenly in the Bering Sea and was hearing Dean say, "Yo, Elaine!" and we were watching her stepping through the galley door with a plateful of burnt chocolate chip cookies. She smiled, at us, happy that we were happy and took a picture of us standing next to the rail in our raingear, bait herring on our gloves, pieces of kelp on our raingear legs and arms. Then she hung the camera on a hook next to the hydraulic levers and went back inside again to get more cookies. Dean looked over at me and Bill and grinned

and then took the camera and took a picture of himself from arms' length, his mouth open, a mess of half chewed cookies spilling over his lips, the kind of picture kids pose for at birthday parties when they're five.

We are alive, all of us, somehow, even those of us who are no longer here. I've wondered if that picture survives somewhere; in an album, in a drawer, in the bottom of a landfill, someplace real, physical, somewhere in this world.



SHIP TOSSED
Jim Haron

THE BALLAD OF RUBBER HOOKS DEVINE

Harrison "Smitty" Smith

According to a fisherman who's name was Devine,
"The world's a cafeteria. You get one trip through the line."
With this fact, then planted firmly in his mind,
He set his sights on having the best that he could find.
He was always dreaming of a life of luxury,
But the way that things were going 'twas likely not to be
Because in order to accomplish these somewhat lofty goals,
He sorely needed every fish that bent his trolling poles.
So long and loud he would complain when a fish slipped off his line,
Consequently he was known as Rubber Hooks Devine.

By unjust fate or foul luck, lost fish his dreams were thwarted.
Resulting in domestic when he'd rather have imported.
Resigned to screw top bottles: no cork stoppered stuff.
Be damned those fish that got away making his life tough.
He had a box of crackers, but no beluga caviar,
And a beat up old Chevy, but no fancy German car
Quality of life in intricate design.
Those were serious matters for Rubber Hooks Devine.

He had a lot of friends among the other trollers,
But, of course, included were no mega-bucks high rollers.
So when a cruise ship bound for Sitka happened by to pass,
He seized this opportunity to view the upper class.
Rubber Hooks maneuvered as close as he dared to sail,
A real nice looking lady was waving from the rail.
A diamond necklace round her throat had slipped its fragile clasp,
Tragically, it fell away despite her frantic grasp.
Diamonds sparkled in the sun as they plunged into the brine,
And by chance became entangled on his port side bow line.

Now Rubber Hooks was trolling a diamond studded lure
That no salmon could resist and that was for sure,

Because there was instant stretching of a spring.
The diamond lure was inhaled by a 35 pound king.
Rubber Hooks crossed his fingers and put the gurdy in gear,
That this fish might depart was his greatest fear.
Oh yes, he got the fish, with those diamonds on the hook.
He clutched onto the necklace and off for Sitka town he took.

Well, on the way he was overcome by the strangest feeling.
If he kept and sold this necklace, in fact he would be stealing.
So he approached the cruise ship office and he left this note.
"I found a diamond necklace and I've got it on my boat.
I want to return it, because it isn't mine.
I'm tied up to the fishing float." signed: Rubber Hooks Devine.

While he was cooking supper from the cabin door a knocking,
Rubber Hooks looked out and what he saw was shocking.
Same good looking lady that was on the cruise ship deck.
She sure looked good to Rubber Hooks despite no diamonds round her neck.
"Come in I've got your necklace. And a seat please take.
I'm just fixing supper here, have some salmon steak."
So they became acquainted as they began to dine
On salmon steak and fried potatoes washed down with screw top bottle wine.

The lady was impressed and she began to feel
That she'd never met a better man, nor had a better meal.
She said, "I'm really jealous of the life you lead,
So what I'm really hoping is a partner you might need."
A deal was promptly made that fulfilled both their wishes.
Rubber Hooks whistled, tying gear and she sang while washing dishes.
So from then on they fished as one and though his nick-name stuck,
Never more was Rubber Hooks heard to curse his luck.

It's five o'clock and we've come in
for a short break. Today is Friday.
You must be leaving your office now
for the weekend. I wish I could leave,
not so much to not be here, but to be there.
I'd meet you at your door, take you
for drinks at the bar in town, take you
to dinner anywhere, take you anywhere,
anywhere just to take you.

Each morning I am here I pretend
I am not here, but there, at home.
I walk downstairs to the kitchen
for coffee. You smile and laugh.
Just the thought of it puts me in
a good mood. Just the thought of you
and I am quicker to hop out of my bunk.
Just the thought of you and I am awake.
Someday, I'll have a similar day dream
From there about wanting to be here.

EAST POINT PROSE POEM
& A LINE BORROWED FROM NERUDA

Jeremy Edward Shiok

I'm sitting high on a bluff in Uganik Bay, in the evening daylight, staring out across the waters of the Shelikof Strait. The skiffs are resting far below, tied to the running line, pulled out beyond the immovable boulders we sometimes knock against at low tide. Beyond the skiffs: a distant wake from a passing seiner slowly approaches the shore, its miniature swells the repetitious waves surfers dream of in large scale. One after the other they approach. Pick your wave and go. As predictable as nature ever will be.

I'm thinking of the friend who reminded me of Neruda one evening back in town. I imagine they are together now out in Bristol Bay, standing on the tired deck of a soggy bottomed boat looking out. I see them lost in the magnitude of what they gain on the ocean: love, direction, adventure, continuity. The sea, the greatest metaphor for anything ever known, surrounds them, surrounds me. I see them found in the magnitude of what they gain on the ocean: time, harmony, solitude, the greatest metaphor for anything ever known.

I'm imagining the fields of fireweed that will come in August, their flowers abuzz with pollination, their message a long goodbye. When it comes, the salmon runs will begin to wane. Perhaps, we'll do one less pick per day, one less trip out to the tender, spend more time chasing whales across the bay, more time up late on nights like these, when we'll sip on scotch by the fire and wait for the green flash of sunset, slipping into the silence of our own memories, the very edge of our own joy, of our own pain, the very edge of an ocean that is the very edge of ourselves, where nothing at all needs saying.

from "It Is Born" by Pablo Neruda:

Here I came to the very edge / where nothing at all needs saying.

As they looked out over the quey
On the cold December morn
The mist rolled in from off the sea
And moistened rose and thorn

And as they turned to make their way
To the safety of their home
Something moved around the bay
With the mist that now had formed

"I see a shadow", she said to him,
"It moves within the fog
And it sends a shiver through my limbs
There! Beyond that log!"

"I see no shadow, nor a shape
I can barely see at all
Perhaps the shadow of my cape
Is what you likely saw?"

"There's a shadow in the mist", she cried "It's here for me, I know!
The restless soul of one who died
Who wants me, now, to go"

"Woman, think of what you say,
Such things are in your head;
For the dead don't haunt by night nor day, The dead are simply 'dead'".

"It's him, I know, I still insist;
I feel his presence now
There is a shadow in the mist
Fulfilling, here, his vow."

"I cannot see you, now my love,
I barely hear your voice;
Don't wander so, the stones above
Are slippery when they're moist!"

And then he saw though the rolling fog
Two shadows meet and kiss
Just beyond the fallen log
Then vanish in the mist.



ANOTHER DAY AT THE OFFICE
Kira Thornton

My genes are contaminated. Going back for centuries, my ancestors have been spawning in their fishing boats and little houses by the sea, passing on a cross-eyed compulsion to catch and kill every fish in sight. The fish lust has manifested itself in me as an affliction that requires regular maintenance, taking me places I don't want to be where I become trapped on boats with people I do not like for extended periods of time in order to catch fish.

Look at me now, a prisoner of my DNA, sweating away under the midnight sun on Bristol Bay in my orange oompa loompa suit as I frantically rip the faces off of salmon with my bare hands. I'm trying to get them out of the net fast enough to keep the captain, who is glaring down at me from the fly bridge, from coming down and really letting me have it.

I paid for this ride, though. Might as well enjoy it. After 33 years of dangling a pole in the water, catching a fish here and there, I was overcome with a desire to catch more fish than I knew what to do with. Every cell in my body was clamoring for an adventure, so I shut down my business and flew to Dillingham, Alaska. I didn't know a soul there, but was operating on the belief that someone would see the hard worker and quick learner in me and agree to take me on as crew for the season.

After two weeks of circling the boatyard and initiating conversations with strangers, my prospects were:

- Captain Lowell, a grizzled, grumpy vegetarian with an unnerving pause in his speech pattern.
- The slime line in the cannery, where salmon was to be hand processed around the clock.
- Peter Pan Seafood's fish tender where I would operate the crane, hoisting giant bags of fish out of boat holds and onto the tender while exchanging pleasantries with skippers.
- A note on the boatyard office bulletin board: Crew Wanted. Call Odie.

I asked around about this Odie guy. It seemed everyone had a story about his der-ring-do. There was the time he went fishing by himself around Togiak. He was gone several months and in his solitude developed 7 different personalities, none of whom were speaking to each other by the end of the trip. He was the guy who never remembered to bring enough food but always had the most and best fireworks on the 4th of July. His tipsy little boat, the F/V Flyin' Lion sounded like it was constantly on the verge of sinking.

Down in the lower 48, I never would have worked for someone like Odie. But after two weeks of trying, I was desperate for a deckhand job, and had found out that the double whammy of being a woman and a greenhorn prevented me from being picky.

I liked the sound of Odie's maverick nature, but it was his reputation as a fisherman that got me all hot and bothered to be his deckhand. Virtually every anecdote ended with our exhausted hero limping out of the smoke triumphantly dragging a giant catch of fish in his wake.

A week after most of the other captains had already gotten their nets wet and caught their first ton of fish, Odie finally appeared. I cornered him at the landing strip, got him drunk and told him that I wanted to be his crew. He had brought a 23-year old greenhorn named Mark, who was to be his other deckhand. Odie hesitated, so while he pondered my proposition I fiberglassed the holes in his boat and mended his nets for free just so that he could see what a good worker I was.

I hadn't known how to fiberglass boats or mend nets, but I cooked up great steaming pots of soul food on a camp stove and offered it to any hungry looking skipper who would take a few minutes to show me some pointers. Odie didn't seem to mind that I was working on his boat and spent most of his time chatting with other captains, which, I figured, is just what captains were supposed to do. Mark didn't do much but gaze quietly into space. I figured he was conserving energy for the fishing and didn't need to prove anything to Odie, as he had already been flown up on Odie's nickel.

While Odie vacillated, creepy Captain Lowell stalked me, as he needed a yes or no on his job offer right away. At the eleventh hour, with Captain Lowell coming around the corner to force a final answer out of me, Odie broke down and took me on as his second deckhand.

Finally, when there were no other captains left on dry land, we launched the boat. Alaska's Department of Fish and Game had announced that the next opener would be from 6 PM until 2 AM that day. We let our big red buoy ball fly on the nose of the opener, along with a fleet of 4000 other boats on the Nugashik River in Bristol Bay.

Odie was proud of the fact that his scruffy fishing vessel, the Flyin' Lion was the wobbliest little boat in the fleet. Maintaining an upright position onboard required a vigorous sailor's dance. I slept wedged tightly against the wall in my little coffin of a bed and had to hang on in my sleep to keep from being thrown to the floor.

The first week out was full of morning demons as this and that part of the boat broke down. Odie would wake in a rage and go storming about the deck ranting about NAFTA, cheap Chinese inventions and liberal cocksucker presidents ruining everything. While Odie ranted, I would be busy bailing out the bedroom or holding the broken regulator against the leaky fireball spurting camp stove as I tried to heat up water so we could have

some coffee.

The fish killing itself was simultaneously exhilarating and disgusting. We'd throw the buoy ball overboard and pay out our 150 fathoms of net. Sometimes the fish would start hitting right away, making big splashes at the buoy line. On the best of days they hit like cement and the buoy line sank under their weight. It made us all happy to see the whole net light up, the buoys looking like they were being struck by machine gun fire. More often than not, though, it was just a clatter of fish here and there along the net. When the net was full we would turn on the hydraulics and winch it back in, and that's when the real work began.

Gillnetting is called gillnetting because the fish are caught in the net by their heads, just behind the gill plate. They swim into the net, get stuck headfirst, then fight and wriggle around to escape, but they're usually in there for good. It was my job as a deckhand to get them out as quickly as possible while the hydraulic drum brought the net up over the roller and back into the boat, ornamented with fish. Some fish would thoughtfully swim in, get stuck and lay there quietly so that I could simply reach under their gills, pull on the net and pop them onto the deck with a neat little shake. Most fish, however, were justly freaked out by their predicament and put up the fight of their lives, swimming through this hole and that in a desperate effort to escape. The resulting mess was a triple bagged fish that required great yanks, tugs, and an occasional cut at the net to get them out.

Experienced fish pickers look like boxers dancing around the net punching and jabbing at it here and there as fish fall out around their feet in a steady patter. All deckhands are given a fish pick to use, which is a hand tool with a blunt point meant to substitute for your finger in the negotiation of a space between the fish gills and the net. But for green-horns like me, the fish pick was more of a burden than a handy tool and I ended up taking a lifetime's worth of latent aggression out on the fish. I grunted and cursed savagely at each and every fish as I tore away.

My hands swelled up like sausages and became calloused claws. Every day, though, they grew stronger and soon, I was able to grab a fish by the back of its head with one hand while tearing off its face with the other, then throw it overhand into the fish hold while reaching for the next fish. After a particularly large set, I would stare at my hands in wonder at what they had just done.

Our bycatch was remarkably small because we were fishing in the sandy bottomed mouth of the Nugashik River. Besides salmon, we brought in the occasional flounder, but mostly, the bycatch consisted of pulverized jellyfish, which came up over the roller spraying jellyfish juice into our pink, swollen faces.

We fished the shallows mostly, pulling right up to the beach then letting go of the buoy ball at the end of the net almost on land then zooming out, pooping out white corks

in our wake.

A few weeks in, the ghost fish started to appear. Ghost fish are fish corpses that have already been caught, injured, and died but are still floating around to be caught again and again in their dead, eyeless, stinky white rotten state. The stench can be almost unbearable and they fall apart in your hands as you try to extract them from the net and throw them overboard in a desperate attempt to rid the boat and you of the smell as quickly as possible.

After all the fish had been picked we pitched them into the fish holds below. This is how fishermen get their Popeye muscles. We grabbed the fish by the back of their heads and flung them two at a time across the deck into fish holds. My arms felt like twitchy lengths of spaghetti after 5000 pounds of fish had been pitched, but rest wasn't an option.

Our boat would sink with more than 17,500 pounds of fish in the holds, so when we were lucky enough to have that much, we blasted off to the tender. Usually, though, we went there because the opener had ended and it was time to drop off the fish before they went bad. We would tie up to the last boat in line and wait our turn to make the drop off. Using a crane to hoist the burgeoning 1000 pound bags of fish from the holds in the bowels of our boats, the tender would unload the fish onto their barge then drop our empty, bloody, fish scale encrusted bags back onto our deck. We would then scrub the holds, douche the bags, hose the deck off and dive down into our bunks for an hour of sleep or so.

After a 10,000 lb day, my chubby little Norwegian girl hands actually steamed. My veins stood out and visibly pulsed for the first time ever. While I was sleeping, they would stiffen into painful claws. Upon awakening, it would take 15 minutes to coax them into opening and shutting enough to pull on my boots, open a beer and hold onto my fish pick.

My feet had become a scary, toxic place to go. I kept them safely buried under a few pairs of socks and rubber Xtratuf boots and tried not to think about them.

I re-learned how to sleep like a child, anywhere, in any position. The gloves, boots and oompa loompa suit were so labor intensive to wrestle in and out of that I frequently curled up on deck and fell into a deep, dream-filled sleep despite the fact that our engine was roaring as we careened down river toward the next likely hot spot.

Odie was an asshole, but he was a funny asshole and at his core had a reasonably good conscience. Mark was duller than dirt, wouldn't utter more than a sentence even when pressed and was a lethargic worker. Odie hated Mark and bitched constantly about him to me. As long as Odie was taking it out on Mark instead of me, I was okay with absorbing his bitching while trying to make Mark feel okay about the fact that Odie couldn't stand him.

I did my best as the official cook onboard, but it wasn't too inspiring since both Mark and Odie saw the need to eat every day as an irritating inconvenience rather than a pleasure. In fact, Mark once told me in a rare burst of talkativeness that he aspired to become a breatharian and get all of his nutrients directly from the sun. His preferred nutrient absorption method was to stare intently at the sun when it was on the horizon for 10 minutes, twice a day, as I was cooked, picked fish, cleaned the boat and tried to keep Odie from killing him.

Because we were on the tipsiest boat in the fleet and the camp stove regulator didn't connect properly, cooking anything at all was a dicey proposition. If I didn't hold the regulator firmly against the stove, propane would leak and the stove would spew dramatic fireballs every which way instead of a nice little controlled flame through the burners. With the constant, unpredictable rocking of the boat, I had to hold on to the pan with my other hand to keep the whole meal from landing on deck. I bragged for days after successfully pulling off macaroni and cheese from scratch.



Chris Freeman

So, when I made a stupid mistake, Odie flipped out and I yelled, "Well, of course I'm going to make mistakes! I'm exhausted!"

After weeks of living on catnaps, we were raw and delirious. I had always equated exhaustion with a lowered ability to reason.

He screamed right back, "We're all exhausted, that's no excuse for doing something stupid."

My "exhausted equals stupid" paradigm had been shattered and I was forced to make a choice. Give up on this whole trip because I was exhausted, and therefore, compromised, or stay with it, be smart, don't make mistakes, and forget about needing sleep in order to be able to make good decisions.

I hadn't even earned enough to pay for my plane ticket and fishing suit yet, so I decided to commit and get through the season, no matter what. I knew this would be an adventure worth retelling, but like most adventures, it was no fun at all to be participating in.

In another week, I had started crooning love songs to the big red buoy at the end of the net to coax it closer to the boat as we picked our way toward it through miles of tangled up fish. Mark stood around picking fish scales off of his hands and obsessively washing them over and over. Odie was going cross-eyed with irritation at Mark, me, and parts of the boat going south, but the real problem was that he was having really bad luck this season. We should have caught double the amount that we had by this time.

One day, during a big delivery at the tender the wind brought the waves up. The tender was where most accidents happened and I was always nervous while we were there. Even tying up and letting go at the tender felt dangerous, since we were tying our towlines to their barge and the ropes would snap hungrily at my fingers as I tightened and loosened them around the cleats. Once we were tied up, a huge crane swung a 40 lb metal pelican hook over for us to catch, which we unhooked from the crane, connected to the fish bags, then reconnected back to the crane. Then, the crane hoisted the bags, bulging with 1000 pounds of fish, out of the holds and lifted them onto the barge. This wouldn't have been a big deal on land but with our boat bouncing around in the water and our deck covered with fish slime and the added concern of keeping each other from getting knocked in the head by the swaying hook or other parts of your boat, it was stressful. An antsy line of boats was invariably waiting behind us making a speedy delivery important. Even Odie, Mister Safety Lite himself, had warned that not properly managing the hook while the other deckhand connected the bags was grounds for firing. He then yelled at me for not being more aggressive and quick at the tenders during a big, stormy delivery and I got angry back at him for making me rush under such dangerous conditions. We resolved our dispute by him getting more involved with the deliveries and me being more aggres-

sive with the bags.

But when that big bag of fish came jerking out of the fish hold, knocking me right overboard into the water, it had an air of inevitability to it. I always had had a feeling that something bad was going to happen at the tender.

Did you ever feel one of your nine lives get knocked out of you? Under the surface it was nice and quiet. Cool, green and salty down there. After a second or two I sputtered up for air, one life lighter. Odie had already leapt down from the fly bridge, over the side of the boat to the swim ladder on the back and was reaching his hand out for me in alarm. I was back onboard as quickly as I'd fallen off. The guys at the tender were in a near panic because they would have been liable if I'd been hurt or killed. They offered me cigarettes, ice cream and a shower, but after my surprise dip in the river, I already felt cleaner and calmer than I had in weeks. It was a very lucky fall; if I'd been caught between the bag and anything else, I'd be as dead as those fish in the bag that knocked me overboard. News travels fast on the Nugashik and we never passed another boat from then on that didn't call out to me, already a novelty in those parts just because I was female, "Got yer life jacket on?," "How was your swim?" or something similar.

At midnight on the 4th of July, we were zooming along to stake out a new hot spot when we hit a sandbar and the shoe was partially ripped from the bottom of our boat. A boat shoe is normally a 5-foot long metal brace that holds the rudder in place. After the collision with the sandbar, our shoe had become a hunk of steel dangling vertically off the bottom of the boat slowing us down to a maximum speed of 2 directionless knots per hour as we limped toward town for a haul out and repair. We stopped first at the tender to drop off our fish and see if we couldn't get the broken shoe all the way off.

The guys at the tender slipped a boat strap under our stern and lifted the back of the boat clear out of the water. Odie hung off the side, clinging with one hand to a rope tied to the tender while balancing his foot in another loop of rope tied to the stern of our boat. As he dangled there above the water with the boat bouncing around, he used an acetylene torch to cut the shoe from the boat with his spare hand. The waves came up again and again, putting out the torch, requiring him to get the preheat back up, and go at it over and over until the thing finally fell off.

When we finally made it to town, it was Eskioke night at the bar. The Upiks are the happy-go-lucky roly poly people of the north. They have a goofy accent and their lives are about subsistence, nothing more. If it's Saturday, it doesn't matter how much the fish are biting or whether the blueberries are ripe, they'll all be taking saunas in tin shacks next to their homes, because that's what they do on Saturdays. A harbor seal washes up on the beach and it is butchered with lip smacking gusto. The white guys tend to think that the Upiks are naive and shortsighted and I bet the Upiks think that the white guys are just as

dumb for working themselves into delirious frenzies just to keep their nets wet every moment of every opener.

There were a bunch of guys hanging around the boatyard sucking down Wild Turkey and trying to restrain themselves from setting off all of their fireworks before dark. None of the fireworks made it until nighttime and most of them didn't make it into the sky; instead, they were aimed at each other. Miraculously, everyone emerged with all 10 fingers intact and the dog wasn't blown up as he played fetch with the fireworks skittering across the ground. If you're not sure whether guns, fireworks, booze, pot and marrying your cousin should all be legal in the same place at the same time, try spending the 4th of July in Dillingham, Alaska to see how that works out.

We overslept the next morning and missed our scheduled 5:45 AM haul out time. The 20-foot Bristol Bay tides forced us to wait another 12 hours for the next opportunity to get our now mud bound boat out of the water into the shop. Meanwhile, we started hearing chatter from our radio group about people bringing in 50,000 pound deliveries. The fishing peak had hit and we were stuck on land with a rudderless boat. Odie, was usually a screamer, grew more and more quiet as the news flooded in.

Two days later, our boat was repaired. We were lowered into the bay and raced out to the fishing grounds in time for the next opener. After just one set Odie fired Mark with a succinct: "Why don't you pack your bags and we'll call this a season." and dropped him off on a tender. Despite the extra work that his absence would mean for me, I was glad to see his silhouette grow smaller as we drove away. He had been spending much of the past few days sharpening his knife and obsessively picking at his hands, while I thought more and more about how neatly his personality corresponded with that of a sociopath.

Our luck didn't change with Mark gone, however. Instead, it grew worse. The fish processing plant's power station burned down the next day. This was an unmitigated disaster for us financially and Odie's emotional funk grew deeper. The water was finally thick with fish but we weren't allowed to catch them because there was nowhere to keep them cold. When we were allowed to fish, we were put on strict 3000 to 5000 lb limits per opening, so we couldn't have made up for our lost time onshore even if we did get lucky.

After catching and delivering our limit, we tied up to the others in our radio group, and sucked down Bloody Marys, trying to have a good time despite the fact that fish were leaping and splashing around our boat.

The crew on the Toonces blithely chatted about whether they'd still be able to make their 250,000 lb goal this year if these limits kept up.

Odie, with only 50,000 lbs under his belt so far, drank and sulked.

The Fish Killers and the Widget, who were under contract to a different processing

plant than we were, radioed in to let us know that they were slaying them out there. We chased our beer with peppermint schnapps.

Odie fumed.

Boats were loading up. Scuppers in, fish were running so thick you couldn't wade through them. They were averaging 5000 lbs a shackle with 4 shackles allowed per boat, every single set.

Odie and I got back on the Flyin' Tiger, pulled away about 1/2 a mile and Odie lost it.

I was in bed when the explosion took place but was jarred awake by the sound of Odie on deck screaming like a possessed man, pummeling and beating himself up with his own fists. He flung himself into the cabin and fell onto his bed and started to snore immediately. I couldn't stand the idea of waking up and having to look at him, so I pulled my sleeping bag out onto the deck to get some rest. A few minutes later, he emerged, puked violently overboard, stumbled inside and started howling and screaming again. He raged and threw himself about the cabin, while I peeked out from under my sleeping bag and noticed that the boat nearest to us looked close enough to swim to. I didn't think any of my possessions were worth staying onboard for if this kept up much longer.

We were able to fish without limits the next opener. We fished mechanically, without enthusiasm or humor. I was so disgusted by Odie that I couldn't look him in the eye. He didn't say a word about his meltdown, but I didn't expect him to. He was broken. We had missed the season's peak and there was nothing we could do but suck it up.

Suddenly and without reason, we drove back into town. I packed my bags as we headed towards land, knowing what was likely to happen next. When we got there, Odie started mumbling about I guess you should pack your bags and we'll call it a season. Now it was his turn to be unable to meet my gaze. He told me that I had done a great job and that it was killing him to let me go. He told me that I'd always have his recommendation which was worth more than a bonus and he was very sorry that things had ended as they had. He couldn't afford me and was going to fish alone for the last few weeks of the season. I told him that it was okay, he'd be okay, he'd catch more fish. He said his whole identity was wrapped up in being this great fisherman and he didn't know if he could live without that trophy.

I slept for eight hours in a row and drifted back up into an awakened state slowly and luxuriantly. I hadn't seen my body in weeks, as it had been continuously encased in multiple layers of clothing underneath foul weather gear. Despite the fact that I had been inhaling candy bars and beers at every opportunity just to keep going, weight had been dropping off of my frame by the hour out there. I was teetering like a drunk after so much balancing on the boat. Swaying back and forth in the shower, I surveyed this new, skinny version of me, all muscles and toughness under pale skin mottled with bruises.

While I was packing up to leave, a chatty captain with a broken down boat in the shop asked me how I liked picking fish. I looked down in wonder at my strong, numb, calloused little hands and loved the sight of them for the first time. I didn't really have any idea how much I had enjoyed picking fish until that moment, when I burst out: "I LOVE it!" I had been so busy trying to keep the boat from sinking, trying to prevent Odie from killing Mark, trying to cook on a stove that either shot fireballs or didn't work at all, trying to get the fish out of the net and trying not to get hurt at the tender that I hadn't really thought about how much fun I'd been having out there. But the truth of the matter was, I had been having a great time!

"Yeah, each fish is like a little puzzle that you have to solve as quickly as possible, isn't it?" He enthused.

I am one of those people about whom they say: "She has a lot of energy...", which has always seemed like a backhanded compliment, implying that I am a hyperactive superspaz, entertaining for about five minutes but for the most part, just too much. I always did have more energy than I knew what to do with, though, and had always been searching for a job that would exhaust me both mentally and physically.

So okay, I confess, I loved it out there. I enjoyed my role as the female anomaly although it meant I had to cook, clean and carry out all other traditionally female chores in addition to my deckhand duties. At the same time, it was liberating to lose all awareness of gender, age and sense of self under my orange shapeless foul weather gear. We didn't have a mirror on board but I assume that I was as covered in black mud, fish blood and scales as the others and it felt terrific to get so filthy and stay that way. When you're picking fish, you don't have time to worry about how much your body hurts, or to reflect on what you are feeling or thinking. You have only one purpose when you're on the water and that is to catch and pick fish. Any between-the-sets drama had to be forgotten the moment fish started coming up over the roller and I loved standing there poised with my hands in the air ready to pounce and get them out.

My fish fever temporarily sated, I hoisted my backpack onto my shoulders and headed home.



HAMMOND NETSCAPES
Claudia Harper

FISH TALES: THE LIFE AND STORIES OF AN ALASKAN FISHERMAN

LaRee Johnson

Kenai, Alaska. George Hayden had begun what would be his annual migration north, along with the salmon. So it had been for the past 57 years, beginning in 1946.

George just turned 85 February 19th, 2004 and when I spoke with him last he was planning yet another migration that spring. He lived “outside” in the winter, though it had not always been that way. He’d spent many a winter in the glistening white wonderland of Alaska. That’s when I first met George, in the winter of 1963. Or was it ‘62? It’s been a long time. And I had the good fortune of visiting his fishcamp since 1963, when I was first introduced to the “cannery,” as it was called because historically it had operated as such in the 1940’s and 1950’s.

His fishcamp was accessible only by boat, maybe plane if you walk down to the beach 3 miles from the strip. Helicopter if it is a real emergency and you have the money. The best way to reach his fishcamp was by personal invitation. He would make the boat trip in an hour across Cook Inlet to Nikiski, a few miles from Kenai... that is, an hour in good weather. Once we tried to cross the Inlet with a storm blowing in, and had to turn back after ½ hour of pounding rain, wind and high waves. We were stuck in Kenai for 2 days with that storm.

The “cannery” is remote, no electricity, no phones or TV, no computer... Our last visit, however, there was indoor plumbing and sometimes hot water. There are no crowds, in fact there aren’t any people unless you walk down the beach 2 miles to Nancy’s place. George did have a cell phone, but only turned it on between 7:00 and 7:30 PM. Too bad if you missed that time, you’d have to try again the next day. It’s peaceful that way, no phones, no crowds, no traffic. Just the sound of the water out front and the birds.

Once you were there, George began his “fish tales” over coffee in the morning or brandy in the afternoon until it ran out. Fishtales, which are not always about fish. You could hear about the bear that broke into his smoke house up the hill, or “Granpa” his bald eagle friend that perched on the craggy rocks above the cannery and waited each evening for George to throw out the evening faire, salmon of course. Or you might hear about the baby seals that would find themselves without a mother and come ashore, spend the summer visiting, and then hopefully strong enough, fend for themselves by fall. Or you could hear about the near disasters with weather, boat mishaps and sometimes even the overwhelming amount of fish that they canned. Those days of abundant salmon are dwindling now though. The fishcamp is more of a remote oasis from the hustle bustle

of American life, as we know it outside. It is a simple, quiet opportunity to get in touch with what really matters. And listening to George's "fish tales" takes on a new importance as you realize that he is sharing a way of life that is fast disappearing. Disappearing for Alaskans, and gone for those of us "outside."

The fish in these photos were the last fish that George pulled in. George suffered a massive stroke after migrating up to Kenai in May 2004, before he reached his beloved "Fishcamp." He died 2 months later at the age of 85. He would not have liked a rocking chair retirement.



GEORGE COLLAGE 7
LaRee Johnson

Best of class, my photograph
First place at the Haines State Fair
Peavines and Longlines
Orange circle hooks, green tendrils, purple blossoms climb and twine,
on what was once my fishing line.

Every year I plant them.

I must have twenty skates of gear stashed underneath the house
Every year I drag one out, stretch the groundline tight between the stakes,
three or four times, back and forth, whatever it takes,
hooks and ganions hanging down,
for tender vines to twine around.

It's been a long dark winter.

Now I feel the breath of spring stir something in me
Makes me think of gardening.
I till the soil, I poke a hole, I make a wish.
I remember when I used it to catch fish.

I remember when I used it to catch fish.

WOE ARE THE FISHERMAN

Dennis Sperl

It's amazing when Alaskan fishermen get only a few cents per pound,
For all their efforts catching salmon, when there's millions in the sound.

Why those that fish for a living, have a bad case of the blues,
'Cause the price of salmon is so poor, they can't afford their booze!

The fellows that work the hardest and have all the expense,
Get the smallest slice of the cake, which just doesn't make sense!

The canneries make profit from the salmon roe, meaning they get the fish for free,
So why the heck can't they pay more, and help the fisher's economy?

A large percentage goes to middlemen, who think they are so shrewd,
But it all comes down to one fact; the fishermen get screwed!

There are brokers and wheelers and dealers, all eager to be paid,
Robbing the fishermen so much, that boat payments must be delayed.

When considering the low dock price, captains and crew all know it isn't right,
'Cause the cost of salmon in the markets, to the consumer, is still an awful fright.

All those between the dock and store, make more than those who've caught,
Dooming the livelihood for some, as the industry goes to pot.

The canneries even hire out-of-state, and pay for the transportation,
This takes more of the profit, and adds to the fishermen's frustration!

There's the cost of million-dollar dormitories, to house the migrant folk,
Robbing more dollars from the hard-working fisherman's poke.

Some canneries have cafeterias that take another slice,
Adding more overhead, which just lowers the salmon price.

The hired cooks and waitresses earn quite a fancy fee,
And their paychecks take some more, from those who fish the sea.

And then there're the interpreters, paid to translate each dirty joke,
Just another cost that's added in, to make vessel owners choke!

There're office 'experts' of all kinds, which are along for the ride,
A lot of salaries paid to them, taken from the fisher's hide.

Some processors have their own planes, to give dignitaries a show,
Laughing at the poor fishermen, slaving on the waters below.

It's clear to see most dollars don't benefit, the hard working fleet,
But only helps others kick back and live on easy street!

Yes, it's the fishermen that get a few cents knocked off the price,
For each and every go-between that's deemed a necessary vice.

And then there may be collusion or fixed prices by processors, too,
Just more negatives for the captains and their hard working crew.

Fish buyers are mistaken if they think salmon are hard to sell,
Why there are fish lovers everywhere, from the Wet Dog down to hell!
(As Norwegians know so well)

There are other markets for salmon, in the pouch or in the tin,
Such as our military forces, our fellow countrymen.

Another thing that's hard to understand, is us with surplus rations,
And salmon isn't bought for a decent price, and given to starving nations?

When half the world goes to bed hungry, it seems like such a crime,
That salmon are not harvested, and fishermen can't make a dime!

Instead our government gives millions of useless foreign aid,
That all the fishermen contribute to, from taxes that are paid.

Most money just helps a nation's hierarchy, live a life that's grand,
And never helps those existing out in the under-developed land.

Our government should buy wild salmon, so fishermen get their share,
Then sell fish WITHOUT the middlemen, to countries in despair.

The nation's leaders couldn't use salmon like money; just anyway they pleased,
So unlike the dollars sent, the starvation of the masses would be eased.

How about we change the policy, and pay fishermen a decent price,
So they can make a living, and poor people can have salmon with their rice?

Our country would not throw away money, and hungry people would be fed,
And most of all, our hard working fishermen, could get out of the red!



Blind love up Keiku Strait
Hope I'm not on another blind date
Rocky, shallow, islands and reefs,
And the babbling rapids that twirl and seethe
What am I doing in a place like this?

Skiff running ahead of the mother ship
"fall back" he yells, "it's another bum trip"
The memory of just having fun aground
When I could've taken
the long way around,
What am I doing in a place like this?

Love is blind and so is this strait,
And about as cute as another blind date,
To the devil's elbow and the summit too,
Here's a very special "fuck you,"
Go ahead and twirl your gear,
but this little boat
is out of here!

They're wingy and wiley
Fast on their feet
God what a character
The pride of the fleet.

You want walk on water
This sucka does that
And will swallow a
Fish head in 3 seconds flat.

You want a three ring circus
With a barnyard full of sound
With clowns galore
Off the ocean shore
And laughter all around.

My friend don't you know
What a pleasure to be
In the presence of a godly creature
A bird so neat
He takes off on his feet
And allows you to laugh
Like a kid in the grass.

So if you never been in awe
And didn't know what's boss
You never lived and fished around
A flock of albatross.

FIRST TIME NORTH: A YOUNG WOMAN'S TRUE ALASKAN ADVENTURE (EXCERPTS)

Lorrie Haight

The cold March rain soaked through my clothes as I made my way along the boats moored on "E" dock in Seattle's Fishermen's Terminal. The Sea Lark was a very nice looking wooden boat. It must have been at least thirty-five feet long, white with green trim, and the mast and smoke stack were a sooty orange. I knocked on the hull and waited expectantly, hoping to see Prince Charming emerge to greet me.

"Are you Leonard?" I asked a bit disappointed at the sight of a short man about sixty years old.

"Yes," he said. His tiny eyes seemed to fight to open wide enough to see, and he smiled through weak lips.

"My name is Lorrie. I'm waiting for my friends. Leslie and Steve have the Hicks over on "D" dock. Do you know them?"

His gaze wandered to the east. After a moment he seemed to remember, "Oh yeah. I know them...They fish up in Alaska out of Deer Harbor."

"Have you seen them around today? They were supposed to meet me here half an hour ago, but there's no sign of life over there now."

"They're usually here working on the boat."

Leonard was a small man with thin, salt and pepper hair that had migrated part way back on his head. He stood with his arms dangling at his sides in an ochre corduroy jacket over a faded work shirt, brown pants and worn loafers. He looked sort of like an Irish Leprechaun with rather plain features.

"I saw your ad for a deck-hand on the bulletin board and thought that maybe you could tell me what it's like," I said.

A wry smile spread over his bland face and he said, "Come on in out of the rain and warm up."

He directed me to a box on the dock to step on and get a leg over the boat's railing. "Grab this shroud for balance...Watch your step."

I clung to the heavy wire rigging as the boat tilted slightly under my weight. We maneuvered around a gray hatch in the center of the deck and ducked under the boom which had a small rowboat perched on top and a whole stock of green bananas hanging below. I followed him through a door at the rear of the wheel house. The sill stood about eight inches high, so I had to step very carefully to get inside the compact cabin. This was the first commercial fishing boat I'd ever been on and everything seemed so strange to me.

The interior was rather like a small trailer with everything arranged in a most efficient manner. Leonard motioned me to sit at the table just inside the door and asked, "Would you like some coffee?"

"Thanks. That would be nice."

It was quite warm and cozy in this hobbit-like space, but smelled musty and faintly of fuel. The whole room couldn't have been more than six by ten feet in size, yet it held a stove, which was the source of heat, a sink by the left side window, the table with bench seats by a window on the right, and up front, in the middle of the room, I noticed a wooden spoke steering wheel.

"Have you ever been fishing before?" He asked as he filled a heavy white coffee mug from a blue enamel coffee pot on the stove."

"No. But Leslie was supposed to introduce me to some of her fishermen friends. I need to make some money and was thinking of giving it a try."

Leonard opened a little cupboard and got out a package of cookies. "What do you do?" he asked while putting a few on a small plate and setting them on a table.

"Not much right now. I had to quit my job because I couldn't afford it."

He looked at me inquiringly as I took a cookie.

"I was working for the Blue Cross of Washington and Alaska, but they wouldn't promote me to work in the computer room. I wasn't making enough money in data entry to pay for everything. I needed to hold down a job in the city. You know: the car, the clothes, the rent, telephone and utilities."

The coffee started to warm me up. It felt good to hold the steamy mug with both hands and the cookies took the edge off my growing hunger.

* * *

When I quit last October, I told them they were losing the best employee they ever had.

He slowly munched on a cookie. "What have you been doing since then?"

"Not much," I said taking the last cookie. "I have been walking around a lot and picking up beer bottles to return for the refund. I can't afford to drive my car. I knew I had to do something soon, so I talked to the Navy recruiting officer a couple of weeks ago."

He froze with his mouth half open and glanced at me as if in horror. In defense I said, "I wandered by their office when looking for bottles and, kinda, took it as an omen. I was in the Civil Air Patrol when I was a teenager and figured I'd do okay in the service. I have to decide pretty quick," I continued, "because next month I'll be twenty-nine and that's the age limit for enlisting."

He peered at me through pale hazel eyes and said, "You could go fishing with me."

The idea brought an absurd smile to face. Fat chance, I thought.

"But I don't know anything about fishing or boats," I said.

"I like to take someone who has never been fishing before, so I can teach her the way things I want things done," he said. "Some girls, who have fished before, think they know it all and you can't teach them anything...I don't want to have to break them of any bad habits."

I could see right away that Leonard liked me and wanted me to go with him. But he wasn't what I had in mind when I came to the boat harbor.

I sipped my coffee then said, "Well, I think Leslie had someone in mind to introduce me to, and I can't make any decisions before I talk to her." Leslie wanted to meet me at 10:30 to introduce me to some cute young guys that needed deck-hands.

Leonard looked down at the down at the table. My last remark must have hurt. I glanced at my watch and said, "Well, I got here on time, but she didn't show up yet. Maybe she's here now. I better go see if I can't find her. Thanks for the cookies and coffee Leonard. It was nice to meet you."

As I started to get up, he went to the drawer and got out a packet of photos. "Finish your coffee first...Here, look at these pictures I took last year in Alaska."

Several photos had scenes of heavily wooded islands with snow capped peaks in the distance. He showered me more with sparse towns built on pilings above harbors clustered with boats. A pretty woman holding up a large salmon smiled at me from one, and he said that was Sally, the woman who fished with him last year.

"How big is that fish?" I asked gasping at it's size.

"That's a fifty-five pound king salmon we caught off Deer Harbor last April. We were getting about eighteen a day for a couple of weeks. Most of them weighed about thirty-five pounds. Occasionally we pulled in a big slab like that one."

He showed me one picture of several totem poles with dark skies all around and explained that it was taken at Alert Bay in British Columbia.

* * *

As he answered my questions about each photo, he ignited my desire for adventure: a desire to go and see things yet unknown. The allure of Alaska was starting to work on me, and I wanted to experience this thing called commercial fishing. I wanted to be in those pictures holding the big fish. But I was a romantic at heart and I just couldn't picture myself with this man.

for Warren Everett Fernald. July 17, 1927 - June 14, 2005

The last week in May, 1972, just after my twenty third birthday, my brother Chris and I limped into Anchorage, Alaska with a total of forty dollars between us. We were out of food and my 1962 Volkswagen van was nearly undriveable. We were able to take showers at the YMCA for a couple of dollars and in order to conserve our scant resources, we took our evening meal with a rag-tag collection of impoverished souls at the True Jesus Mission. All that was expected in return was that we sit quietly and listen to the sermon, always given before the meal, which often included road-killed moose.

The buzz on the street was that there weren't any jobs to be found. Others like ourselves had come with bright hopes of finding their fortunes in "The Great Land", but in reality, most of the work that was available were union jobs or required skill and experience. And yet we weren't discouraged. We were fishermen and like all good fishermen were used to inconveniences. I wasn't sure how, but one way or another I was going to try my hand at fishing commercially for halibut which required that we reach Homer, a small fishing town located a couple of hundred miles to the south. All we required was some temporary work to put us back on the road again. And it was a sure bet we were going to need to replace the engine in the van.

The journey north had been an arduous one, but after six months on the road we had grown accustomed to a certain level of hardship. The trip from Vancouver, British Columbia, a distance of twenty-four hundred miles, had taken ten days. Fifteen-hundred miles of the Alaska Highway was washboard gravel where the dust was so thick that it clung to the rear bumper like a pack of wolves after a jackrabbit, and it had seeped into everything. Flying gravel had been such a problem that we had outfitted the windshield and headlights with removable covers made of galvanized wire mesh. We'd been dogged by mechanical problems right from the start. After each break-down, we'd always managed to get going again, but the miles and the dust had taken their toll. You can only push your luck for so long before it runs out altogether. At that point, you pack up whatever you can carry and you start walking.

In Prince George we got a new flywheel. Somewhere near Teslin Lake, in the Yukon Territory, a front wheel came off which could easily have finished us. When we reached Whitehorse, the van was running only three of its four cylinders. If you start out with only thirty-six horses and a quarter of them die on the trail, that leaves twenty-seven, on a good day. Then you have to account for the drag created by the dead cylinder. Hills were

our biggest challenge and with a top speed of forty-five MPH on flat ground, we were becoming a road hazard by the time we reached King Mountain, just seventy-five miles northeast of Anchorage.

We had just gassed up at King Mt. Lodge and were pulling onto the highway when, with a loud crack, the hub broke right out of the new flywheel. It didn't look good. The lodge owner reluctantly agreed to help us move the disabled van off the highway with a small bulldozer and in doing so, managed to dent in the back end with his blade. We were in no position to complain. After all, we were secure, at least for the moment, and help was at hand.

With less than a hundred dollars left between us, we located a Beetle with a blown engine, just down the highway, bought the flywheel for a nominal fee, pulled the engine with the help of a local mechanic, and got the van back on the road once again. This time though, since we lacked a replacement oil seal we were forced to use the old one. When the engine was running, hot oil gushed out into the bell housing until it emptied the crankcase. I was able to solve this problem by wiring an empty gallon milk jug under the engine to catch the oil as it escaped.

We took turns driving while keeping a close eye on the dash. When the red light came on, indicating a drop in oil pressure, the driver would pull over and shut off the engine while the "engineer" ran back and poured the hot oil back into the engine. This was repeated every mile and a half. It took several hours and about fifty stops to reach Anchorage. We drove right downtown and found a vacant parking lot just off Third Avenue and set up housekeeping.

During the 1964 Good Friday earthquake, large stretches of First and Second Avenue had settled and slid West towards Cook inlet. All that remained where they had been was a large grassy hillside which sloped away towards the railyards. Beyond that, a muddy road led to a launch ramp on a small peninsula which jutted out into Ship Creek where several old wooden buildings languished, surrounded by an assortment of boats. From my vantage point a half-mile away I spotted a Volkswagen van behind one of the buildings. It was hard to miss since it had been painted Bimini blue. Flanked as it was by stacks of lumber and derelict boats, its rear-end sitting on oil drums, it looked abandoned. I wondered if it still had an engine. This warranted further investigation.

The following morning I made my way alone down the hill and across the tracks. Presently I came to a large low building with the words ANCHORAGE MARINA painted in large faded red letters across the gable end. The place had a neglected, somewhat ramshackle look to it. Not chaotic but just disorganized enough to be interesting. I walked up to the front of the building and went inside. As I pulled open the big door a pulley squeaked and a piece of broken crankshaft tied to a rope went upwards, then down

again, pulling the door shut behind me. I had entered a long low shop. Straight ahead of me stretched row upon row of Mercury outboard motors on racks. Many of them looked to be antiques and had clearly been there a long time. Everywhere on the floor were boxes of parts, small pieces of equipment and machinery. An overhead track for moving motors ran above a central aisle which led sixty or so feet to the back of the building where the workshop was located. A small alcove at the front of the shop to my left served as an office.

At an old government-surplus desk with his back to me sat a large man in a dark plaid wool shirt and wool trousers. Around him hung a layer of grey smoke which emanated from the pipe he was smoking. A collection of trophies collected dust on a shelf above the desk. Several of them were adorned with tiny chrome-plated race boats. The man didn't turn around when I entered but went on working, writing up an invoice I supposed. I waited a few seconds, then spoke to him.

"Are you the owner of the blue van behind the building?"

Without turning around he replied. "Yep."

"Does it have an engine in it?"

He drew on his pipe. "Yep."

I was thinking that we weren't off to a very good start. I watched the back of his bald head as he continued working. The pipe smoke had spread out horizontally in the still air of the office. It smelled sweet, like Borkum Riff.

"My brother and I have just driven up the highway in a VW van and we have a blown engine. We've been parked up off Third Avenue. I spotted yours from up there."

"Where you from?" he asked.

"Maine. We left there right after Christmas." He'd stopped working.

"To come here?"

"No, we went to Florida first, ran out of money and ended up picking oranges. After we got going again, we drove around the Gulf Coast and down the East Coast of Mexico."

As he ruminated on this, a heater fan came on somewhere back in the shop causing the smoke cloud to stretch out and begin to dissipate.

"So what made you decide to come to Alaska?" He'd swivelled halfway around in the heavy wooden office chair so he could get a better look at me and was leaning back with his hands behind his head puffing on the pipe which jutted from his jaw. He looked to be about sixty.

"Oh, I guess I'd been thinking about it for years and just needed an excuse. Then we met a couple from Homer on the beach down there south of Vera Cruz. They told us about how they'd been longlining for halibut from a skiff. It sounded interesting, so I decided that what I wanted to do was drive to Homer, find a boat and go halibut fishing."

"Halibut fishing?" He cocked his head slightly as he uttered the words in a quizzical way which indicated more than a passing interest in the subject.

"Yeah, they used to tub-trawl for them back in Maine, and still do some, but the fish have gotten pretty scarce."

"Have you had any experience doing that kind of fishing?" He'd taken his pipe from his mouth.

"No, but I've worked on lobster boats and I figured I could learn what I needed to know, so back in March, we decided to cross over to the other side and drive up the West Coast. We've had a few delays along the way."

"What year is your van?" he asked. I wondered where this was going.

"It's a '62 with a 1960 engine. It's a thirty-six horse ." He stood up. He was ruggedly built, not as tall as I'd expected.

"I'm Bud, Bud Tout. Welcome to Alaska." I stepped forward to shake his outstretched hand.

"Jay Speakman. Pleased to meet you."

We talked for close to an hour, mostly about fishing and boats. Nobody else came in so Bud showed me around his shop. I learned that he'd grown up near Sacramento, California, had prospected for placer gold on the Trinity River during the Great Depression, then left on a steamer bound for Alaska with five-hundred dollars in gold dust as his grubstake, and never went back. He'd ended up at Kodiak working for the Navy as an engineer during the war, then moved to Anchorage to design and build river boats for the Army. In the fifties he'd begun racing outboard-powered hydro-planes and distinguished himself as one of the fastest men in Alaska which explained all the trophies I'd seen in the office. He was the Mercury outboard dealer for the region and was clearly an accomplished mechanic and machinist.

Eventually the conversation shifted to the blue van. Bud told me that he intended to turn it into a swamp buggy and preferred to hold on to the engine, though he offered to loan it to me, as long as I brought it back when I was through with it. I was a bit taken aback by his generosity, but I still needed a job so I decided to ask him straight out.

"Would you be looking for any help around the boatyard?" He thought about it for a few seconds, then replied.

"I'm not really looking for anybody right at the moment, but why don't you come back in the morning and we'll see if we can find something for you to do." I was elated.

"What about my brother?"

"Bring him along too." I was whistling as I walked the half-mile back to town.

The island lobster fisherman rises well before dawn. Checking the fire in the kitchen stove, he takes another drag on a Raleigh while listening to the marine forecast on the radio. WDEA FM out of Ellsworth, Maine. Northwesterly fifteen to twenty knots, clear skies and temperatures in the twenties. Fairly typical he muses, for late November. A bit draughty for some perhaps. But not for the working man.

When the kettle boils, he methodically opens a jar of Nescafe instant and brews himself a cup, while back in the pantry, his wife Anna puts up his lunch which always includes two molasses doughnuts. After a light breakfast he pulls on a pair of Red Ball insulated boots over hand knit woolen socks. Rough woolen wristers, the color of oatmeal, a dark blue watch cap and a tattered nylon parka with cuffs cut off complete the rig. A well-worn aluminum lunch pail in one hand, he leaves the house quietly so as not to awaken six children, snug in their beds upstairs in the big house his grandfather gave him with the instructions "fill it up". He's doing his best to keep his end of the bargain though it's a burden which weighs heavily on him. Too heavy for some perhaps, but not the working man.

He shudders as the fresh air hits his face. Never much cared for the cold weather but this is the path he's chosen to follow. Colder days are on the way and besides, Christmas is coming. Every one of these days now is worth a week in the summer. Soon enough winter will tighten its icy grip on the islands and he will retreat to the workshop behind the house, there to do gear work until the days again lengthen and lobsters return to the shoals. Until then they'll be getting by on what he alone can make in these next few weeks. They might have to rely on borrowed money along about March, but they'll live well enough as islanders have for generations. Not well enough for some, but it will do just fine for the working man.

The lobster price went down to forty five cents a pound last week but he hasn't missed a day out since the tenth. Heating oil is 19 cents a gallon but the tank is full and since having an oil-fired furnace installed the previous year, it's a relief not to have to shovel coal. With a few cases of canned goods and plenty of potatoes, flour and sugar down cellar, all he needs is fifteen or twenty more days out and he can breathe a little easier. In darkness he navigates the quarter mile to the shore on foot. Doesn't own a pickup truck, nor a driver's license for that matter. Never needed one. A bit inconvenient some might say, but not for the working man.

Down the hill and onto the darkened lobster dock, past wooded casks filled with salt herring, its cachet swirling on the wind, he baited up the night before, so it's right down the ramp and into the skiff. There's frost on the seat. Though he's never learned how to

swim, he casts off from the float with confidence, pulling on the oars in a steady rhythm out into the harbor where nine lobster boats ride a Northwest chop, each tethered with a chain to a block of quarried Maine granite. As he rounds the stern of the thirty foot lobster boat Bobby Rich built for him from cedar and oak, her weather beaten canvas riding sails woofs in the breeze as if to welcome him aboard. Her name, painted in prominent black letters across the transom, reads *Mother Ann*. Named for the hardworking woman from Bar Harbor, his wife of thirteen years, her day will begin with children wanting their breakfast. Two still in diapers, a school day for the rest, just a short walk up the road to the island's two-room school house. A bit archaic some would say, but it was good enough for the working man.

Aboard the boat now, a squirt of starting fluid brings the six-cylinder Chevrolet 292 to life with a bark, announcing to those still ashore that it's another day out. Warming his hands on the exhaust pipe that leads straight up through the cabin roof, he shivers as a streak of steely grey smoke trails off downwind into the darkness. With thick calloused fingers he pries another cigarette from the pack and lights it, then dons a pair of gurry-stained yellow bibs before casting off from the mooring. Heading out into the chop of the harbor he knows that his life on the mainland, a steady paycheck, a modern school for the kids. But not this working man. His course has been set. Too many days already, he's gone to haul with a case of beer stashed under the stern deck, coming home in an alcohol stupor. But that's all behind him now, and as long as he can make a decent living, he'll hang on through fuel and bait shortages, gear wars, hurricanes, low prices, lean times and close calls too numerous to count, none of which is of any concern to him as he turns the corner off Eagle Point for there's already a steady orange glow out ahead in the eastern sky and he's got traps to haul.



Laurie Anderson

For me it started with a phone call, ten years ago, from a man named Jon Broderick who introduced himself as a French teacher and a fisherman, a man who wondered if I might want to help him put together a poetry reading for people who earned their living at sea. I just couldn't resist the project, knowing he'd found two important lines that run through our community and found the place where they intersect.

So a few more phone calls were made, and a group of us got together: Jon, Robert Brown (stock broker and poet), Hobe Kytr (museum curator and musician), Florence Sage (counselor, teacher), and me. We met twice a month at the Wet Dog Café, planning some kind of event that we didn't have a name for yet, over Peacock Spit and chicken juanitas. We called ourselves the comrades.

None of us had a clue how to pull it all together, but we scouted for venues that served beer, checked calendars against fishing seasons, made phone calls, wrote letters. The best connection we had to the fishing community was Jon Van Amerongen, editor of *Alaska Fisherman's Journal*, who faxed us a list of every poet and writer who'd ever appeared in his journal. Pretty soon, word of mouth took over and we started to get phone calls: from Alaska, Canada, Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii, even Norway. There were fishermen who wrote poetry out there, and they were willing to come.

I remember how nervous we were the morning of the first Gathering. I remember distinctly thinking it was all overly ambitious, that the poets wouldn't show up, there'd be no audience, the programs would be all wrong. What if we'd thrown a big party, and nobody came?

But that first Friday night, people did show up. The *Wet Dog* was filled to capacity. Hundreds of people wanted to hear the poets. We ignored fire regulations and let everybody in. There weren't enough chairs, so lots of people had to stand. We, the comrades, were so surprised, and so happy, we could hardly stand it.

And the poets – surprising, sparkling, smart, sensitive, sassy – we couldn't get enough of them. They weren't writing about Grecian urns, they were sharing their poetry of water and wind, salmon and sardines, parkas and puking, good days gone bad, and bad days gone to the Coast Guard. As Van Am later said, "It wasn't your typical crowd of poets. No chain smokers scribbling madly, muttering and throwing wadded pieces on the floor... No tweed."

How could I forget Geno Leech, standing in front of the crowd kissing a microphone for the first time in his life, closing his eyes to block out the audience while he belted out

rhymers from memory, rocking back and forth as though he were still on deck:

*...I fished with a guy, he had a death wish
He fished like a drunk, and drank like a fish
He's from Eureka, has a slab called Blue Star
And he blows every dime in the Vista Del Mar...*

Or Rich Bard, who's been trolling for salmon since 1971:

*...And boat work's at hand, though the weather's still foul
And the money's near gone, and the creditors howl
And the garden patch, it's still too frozen to trowel
What we need is a fish to stay March's mad growl...*

Or "Dangerous Dave" Densmore, who joined us the second year. I didn't know who he was when he swaggered in wearing a black jacket and jeans, face and hands beat up from years out at sea – he made me a little nervous, but the Wet Dog crowd hushed with respect and people bowed their heads respectfully when he read his poem about losing people he loved to the sea...

The music turned out to be a nice surprise. Moe Bowstern, who belted out songs *a capella* with the sweetest voice, Shanghaïed in Astoria singing old sea songs with guitar and fiddle, Hobe teaching us all a song about seining at Miller Sands, and actually getting 350 people in a bar to sing along.

We didn't realize then that we were starting something that would last so long, but here it is 10 years later and I love the legacy that Fisher Poets has created. each year, on the last weekend of February, celebrating a maritime culture and lifestyle that is very precious to us and should not be allowed to fade.

Donna Quinn

I knew I'd left the desert, when I moved here three years ago
Cause I heard Bar conditions and messages to crabbers, when I turned on the radio
Coastal warnings on KMUN's Columbia River Ship Report with info on the ships,
Which I can watch glide past my window, as I savor fish and chips,
Boats & Fish, Boats & Fish ... and lots of men with beards around,
Rain and slickers, pots and nets, and ropes and chains abound,
A different world with boating talk and fishing slang each day,
And it's not steak they're thinking of when they ponder a filet



Pat Dixon

I like it here in Waterworld, for though it's wet, wet, wet
There's "real" here still – the Elements may save us from yuppification yet,

I haven't spent much time on boats out in that big big water
But the way these Fisher Poets rhapsodize, someday I think I oughter

I like Sagebrush, Sun and Dirt, The Earth beneath my feet,
What is it about this fishing life these Fisher Poets find so sweet?

They say it's freedom on the sea, no random calls or bills to pay,
And catching lots and lots of fish, some work and then some play,

They all admit the danger there,
and most of them have had a scare,

Perhaps a mini-trip for me to see what it's about,
But then I think of practicalities, and then I have a doubt

What about my Ruby Dog, and what about my Tia cat?
And then there's a little issue of where I'd roll out my yoga mat,

The space and time between the fishing they say is most appealing
I guess it's in some folks blood and bones, this longing to be reeling,

Although my daughter was desert born where it is dry, dry, dry
She turned out to be a Northwest Mermaid, and that's the reason why,

I'm living in this fishing town with sturdy men and women,
And I now dream of fishy food wild-caught with a little lemon

The locals carry plastic bags around of Willapas and Razor Clams,
And quirky characters thrive here, in fact, they're all darn hams,

Although I miss the nightly coyotes howling out my door,
Sea Lions barking on the jetty offer extra consolation for,

Living in this fishing town at the edge of Waterworld,
Where foreign ships shift energy, so no one can be bored,

This River offers healing and reflective time to be,
The inward glance, the look inside, in darkness we can see,

So laud the fishers and the poets, philosophers and crew,
For they've made Astoria, the Fishliterate thing to do.



FLORIAN CRAB

1924 11/26/27

END

When I was very young, a monster lived in my backyard. And he was smart! I could never find him in the daytime. He was a nighttime only monster. When I woke up at night, I could hear him out there. Sometimes, he was tricky and sounded like the howling wind. Sometimes, he sounded like cats shrieking. But, most of the time, I could hear just his feet scuffling heavily along the ground. If I got up enough courage to look out the window, the prickly bushes started to shake and I could see his crooked shadow in there.

I wondered why he never came inside my house. There was always the chance that next time he might. He was much bigger than I was. When I caught a glimpse of him, he had wild red eyes and sharp claws. His body was covered with fur and he had thick yellow hair all over his head and face. I tried to pretend that he was a friendly monster, but he had big pointed teeth that I believed could be used to bite.

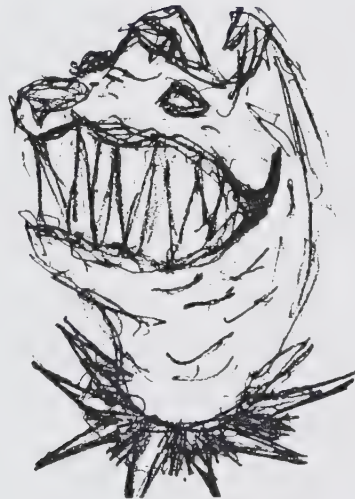
Sometimes he fooled me into thinking he had gone away, because I didn't hear him for a long time. Then, I would wake up and hear his feet scraping along the ground and I would begin to shiver.

One night I noticed something odd. He was smaller. The bushes below my window didn't shake so loudly and his footsteps seemed lighter. I thought maybe he was getting smaller, as I was getting bigger.

Then we moved far away. I was sure he wouldn't be able to find me. But one dark night, I thought I heard him scuffling along the ground. I crept courageously to the window and peeked out at the berry bushes in our new backyard. He was even smaller than I remembered. I hoped he would continue shrinking until he disappeared completely.

I heard him less and less often as I got older and then he was gone and I forgot all about him. I was all grown up. But last night, I woke up and there he was. He was huge and wild. I wonder how he found me.

Eyelids heavy falling fast,
Into a world strange we descend,
Babbling blue monbats cast black
massive shadows that sway and bend,
Faint light moves in scary ways,
Caves of darkness house the daunting
A giant tiger there he lays,
Make a wrong move and you'll be done.
Awake for just a moment,
You grasp dreams and drift back to sleep,
Yes, dancing pink panthers do,
Out of them you won't hear a peep.
In fantasy none are lost,
Brightly painted parrots sing song,
Destruction of trees will cost,
The lives of many before long.



EVERYONE SMILES
Chris Ahlvers

Jack glanced up at the cheap gray electric clock. It was straight up 11 o'clock. He'd been a clock-watcher since Mr. Webb's class in fifth grade. He looked down at his plain brown shoes. Jack wouldn't have to walk far, and he didn't want his shoe strings to come undone; that would be embarrassing.

Jack had time to contemplate his problems. He had to deal with his troubled past. Jack was trapped in his own Plato's cave. Although he wasn't chained in an underground den unable to turn around with a fire roaring behind him, he had his own shadows dancing off the walls of his mind. His shadows were sordid memories he needed to reason out. Jack was lucky he still had time to figure out his problems. Jack didn't have to think about all his good memories, all the memories he thought he'd call on while drooling to death in a rest home like his grandmother. Life wasn't going to work out that way. He was lucky. He was probably better off than a lot of people, he just couldn't think of any right now. He had to concentrate, concentrate on the shadows, the memories that made him feel bad about his life, the memories that really bothered him.

Jack glanced up at the cheap gray electric clock. It was 11:05. One of the things that bothered him was the body, the memory of the body slamming into the hood of his pick-up with the velocity of a refrigerator. It scared the living heck out of him. Jesus, if he would have been six feet forward the body would have caved in the roof of his old truck. He thought the heavier steel in his old Chevy would have saved him from a broken neck, but who knows, it might not have killed him, just paralyzed him. Is that what his old man and his drinking buddies meant when they said they don't make them like they used to? Would being paralyzed be worse than being dead? He needed to give that some serious thought. Did Edward James Stanton even think about killing someone else when he jumped off the bridge nicknamed suicide? The name Edward James sounded like someone successful in the obituaries. Eddie Stanton sounded like a jumper. Why didn't Eddie try something more original, like robbing a well-guarded armored car? If he pulled off the robbery he could buy a life, if that was possible. If he didn't, the guards would kill him anyway. All he had to do was jump them with an empty sawed-off twelve-gauge. Of course, if Eddie had Jack's luck, some well-meaning Good Samaritan would have jumped in and saved his life for later.

Jack glanced up at the cheap electric clock. It was 11:12. He thought about his old man and his they-don't-make-them-like-they-used-to philosophy. The old man and his drinking buddies always spit out crap like that while leaning up against the fence that

circled the lower corral, passing around a bottle of Jim Beam whisky and chasing it with warm Budweiser. The boys had a nice view of the Willamette Valley, mostly green, even in the summertime, as they whiled away the hours gazing down on the old man's pack burros, planning hunting trips they never took. The old man and his buddies were all WWII vets and had seen the world and killed a sizeable part of it, yet they still couldn't espouse more than a few worn platitudes for some of life's most important questions. He'd ask them, "How do you vote on taxes?" and they'd all raise their beers and shout, "No!" He'd ask them, "How do you raise a son?" and they'd all raise their beers and shout, "Tough!" He'd ask them, "What's wrong with the government?" and they'd all lower their beers and say, "They always screw the working man." He'd ask them, "Where's all your tax dollars go?" They'd stare straight ahead, and one of them would answer, "To welfare wenches with a drink in one hand, a cigarette in the other hand, and a brat on each knee with a different father."

Then the old man would say, "Well heck, Henry, you just need to pay your back child support." And they'd all laugh together. He'd ask them, "What's wrong with the younger generation?" and they'd all raise their beers and shout, "They don't make them like they used to!"

Listening to the old man and his friends bothered Jack greatly as he noticed they never asked why things were the way they were. He asked the old man several times why things were the way they were, and he always answered, "That's just the way it is, kid, that's just the way it is."

Jack's mother seemed much brighter than his old man, and he asked her why the old man and his buddies just looked at the burros and never made any trips. His mother said that all they needed was the talking and the planning; they didn't need to bother with the actual trips. Mothers were so smart; he should have listened to his. The burros must have been smart, too, as they didn't do anything but eat and sleep. In fact, they made out like they had robbed an armored car. One thing he knew for sure was that the burros were in the right place at the right time. He wondered if they made burros the way they used to.

Jack glanced up at the cheap gray electric clock. It was 11:18. Thinking of the old man, the burros, and the corral made him remember their old ranch dog, John. All their ranch dogs were named John so the old man wouldn't have to buy tags when one of them died. John was a great old guard dog and went everywhere with the old man and Jack. Then they bought the wild colt he named Jody from the local rodeo. Jody stomped John when he was barking at the colt for chasing the burros. Old John started whimpering and bleeding through his mouth, and Jack remembered begging the old man to call Jerry, their vet. He'd never forget how the old man looked at him real grim, grabbed a hammer,

knocked the dog in the head, and tossed the body on the manure pile. Seeing the look on Jack's face, the old man shook his head and said, "He's just dead, kid, that's all there is. He just made a mistake, kid, and he'd dead. That's just the way it is, kid."

Jack remembered thinking that his old man was really screwed up, and he was still trying to figure out what "is" was. Later that day when he went back to bury John, his body was gone. He figured his dad had buried him. He wished they could have buried the dog together, but maybe the old man had enough of burying friends with friends. It had been a long war for him.

Jack glanced up at the cheap electric gray clock. It was 11:20. He was still bothered by why Eddie took the leap. Was it a woman? He wondered how many men killed themselves over women. It was probably fifty-fifty. Like everything else in life, it was a coin toss. The trick was in knowing what to call and when to call it. The trick was to be in the right place at the right time.

Eddie's dead eyes still haunted him; they were unforgettable. He saw those dead gray eyes every night in the drab green ceiling. He had read where the ancients had weighed bodies at the point of death and directly after to find if there was weight in the soul; they couldn't find any difference. Jack wondered if they had lost faith. He had read that new scales discovered twenty-one grams were lost. He wondered if the scientists gained faith. He would have weighed Eddie's eyes. The eyes seemed to be the key. He had watched his dog die and had seen the death glaze. Jack had hated seeing that, and he had hated seeing it again.

He wondered whether his own wife would have mourned if he had killed himself. If she did, it meant he'd made one heck of a big mistake. If she didn't, it meant he'd made one heck of a big mistake. A guy had to kill himself for himself or it just didn't work out. Jack wondered about the guys who chased being winners their whole lives, then gave up. Maybe there wasn't any winner, just different degrees of losers. The Trappist Abbey monks knew. He was positive they knew, that's why they took a vow of silence so they couldn't share their secret.

Jack glanced up at the cheap gray electric clock. It was 11:26. He missed sharing a glass of good house merlot with his Vietnam War buddy, Mike. He wondered what bar Mike was in tonight telling folks how thirty or forty years ago today he and twelve of his buddies got their butts shot off in the Ho Chu Valley or something like that and how they were the finest men he'd ever known. He wondered how the presence of death made people more fine and how you had to lose a leg to need a leg.

Jack took a long deep breath. This place smelled. He would never forget the smells, smells stayed with you. He remembered smelling the old man's tack sheds, the worn leather bridles and fine braided hackamores coated with the dust and straw smell. He

remembered how cobwebs coated the cracked windowpane, splintering the warm sunlight and bathing the saddle corner where he and the dog would curl up and take naps on warm shiny afternoons. The old shed smelled of honest work and sweaty horses and the quiet and stillness of many jobs well done. He remembered the smell of his school's cafeteria food line. Who could forget steaming meats and washed vegetables and the spray of hot water and dirty trays with soap smell mingling, lingering, hanging on in the humid crowded aisles? Years later as he shuffled through different food lines, smell memories washed over him like the soapy water scouring the dirty plates. And the food servers all looked the same.

Jack glanced up at the cheap gray electric clock. It was 11:29. He was wide awake; the only place he could really sleep well was in church. He remembered his mother saying, don't be like your father, stay awake in church. He was like his old man; he slept in church and he did love his mother. His mother was a good woman, as most mothers are, and it was troubling to him that so many good mothers had been bad girlfriends. Thinking about this made him schizophrenic. He was Lutheran, and Lutheran churches were awful stoic, giving him plenty of time to sleep and plenty of time to think and notice things. One day he noticed that all the men in their congregation who didn't sleep in church were what his mom called Casper milquetoasts, and he wasn't sure what that meant. He suspected it meant they listened to their mothers and that his mother never would have dated them.

There was one day in church he would never forget. It was the day when the man in the old gray suit woke everyone up. Jack was hanging out in the balcony with the rest of his confirmation class pals, where they were alone and could be ordinarily bad fourteen-year-olds. That particular Sunday his buddy Rick had spotted a hole about the size of a golf ball in the corner of the stained glass window in the alcove encasing the icon of Jesus. They were trying to toss sugar cubes they had stolen from the rectory's kitchen through the hole for a nickel a toss. They were 0 for 3 and had people glancing back up over their shoulders to see what the racket was when the man in the old gray suit walked right up the church's center aisle, turned, and faced the congregation.

He said, "I have come here to confess. I have just killed my wife and children. I ask you for forgiveness and want you to know your pastor."

At that point an old man and a deacon who had just woken up each took the man by an elbow and kind of floated him out of a side exit. It turned out the man had tried to kill his family and had knocked them in their heads with a hammer while they were sleeping. They were in pretty bad shape, but they all pulled through. Jack had always wondered what the man was going to say about their pastor. His mother said he was probably going to say he was a good man. Jack didn't know about that, but it was the only time he

had seen a preacher nearly speechless. He heard later that the man had been committed to the Salem State Hospital for the criminally insane. He wondered if God had problems forgiving a guy for something like that.

Jack glanced up at the cheap gray electric clock. It was 11:38. He felt like talking to a cabby. Cabbies beat priests every time. Cabbies were the sages of the working classes. A Portland cabby turned him on to Pascal's Wager, and that had changed his life. The cabby told him how Pascal thought if you believed in God and there was a God, you were in for fat city; and if there wasn't a God, what did you have to lose. On the other hand, if you didn't believe in God and there is a God, you're not going to be in the right place at the right time. That's why the cabby said he always had a crucifix swinging on his rear view mirror. Cabbies were great; they were the trench soldiers of the frontlines of humanity. They lived immersed in the bowels of the intimate senses of lovers, haters, hookers, tippers, robbers, sex, love, and hate, with no sleep in one late night shift. He could use a night cab ride now with a good cabby talk. Cab rides were therapeutic.

Jack thought a lot about God and religion now. He wondered about Adam and Eve and why his religion had to start out with a totally dysfunctional family. For a while he was a born again atheist, but the cabby and Pascal's Wager had scared the living heck out of him. Maybe there was more to it than just being in the right place at the right time. He had studied the great religions, and they seemed pretty much the same. He couldn't believe how much he loved to read and how many great books he had read. He was thinking clearly now, with no alcohol or drugs for fourteen years. He probably couldn't have come clean on his own.

Reading was how he discovered deism. Thomas Jefferson was a deist. If it was good enough for Tommy Jefferson, it was good enough for him. Jack liked the idea that a creator made the earth like a big clock, wound it up, and watched it tick out its own path to eternity. Eternity, now there's a word you couldn't define. He wondered why there had to be one God or two Gods or whatever. Why couldn't there just be a paradise where everyone went; the good, the bad, and the in-between all showed up and were all happy, healthy, wise, and good. Why did there have to be punishment and suffering? Wouldn't a real God want to save all of us? Because all of us were his or hers or whatever bliss that kissed nirvana with eternity and something even better than an everlasting life we couldn't comprehend. Maybe he could meet up with Eddie Stanton and ask him why he jumped. Maybe Eddie would be happy. That would be wonderful, that's the way it should be, he hoped it would be. He had to have faith, and he really did, he really did have it.

Jack glanced up at the cheap gray electric clock. It was 11:43. He looked down at the plate of his favorite meal, pork chops and lima beans. It wasn't as good as his mother's. He wished she could have cooked it. She was gone, and he didn't even want to think

about that. He stared at the pale urine yellow walls. Urine yellow walls, he thought. Who picked the color schemes for mental institutions and prisons? They must have been really sick people. Jack wondered why they executed people at midnight; it seemed uncivilized.

Jack felt good. He'd worked through the important stuff; that's what his doctor called it, stuff. Now he could relax. He glanced back up at the clock. It was 11:44. He had sixteen minutes and change to live.



BOX STUDY
Bradley Knox

I used to believe that the moon was made of cheese,
The sun was paper mache,
And the stars were hung with string.
My days were spent happily playing Make Believe.

As I grew older I put my jacks, pickup sticks,
And paper dolls away.
Then I spent my days in grown up ways.
Gone were the days of playing Make Believe.

Now that you are gone, I find myself playing
Make Believe once more.

I turn on a song we used to sing, close my eyes,
And for a moment I hear your voice loud and clear.
Then I realize that it's only Make Believe.

I take your memory out from that special place.
Just for a while to believe you are here.
Then I realize that I am just playing Make Believe.

I go back to my grown up world, until I can bring your
memory out once again.
Thank God for Make Believe.

Dad's cherry pipe tobacco smoke lingers like a day-old fart in the morning mist. I move farther downstream, but upwind, and tie on a red and white striped spoon.

Cast, reel, snag on rocks, swear, stomp around, jerk pole frenetically in every direction, free lure from rocks, repeat process.

But the worst day of fishing is still better than the best day of high school, so I am grateful that Dad occasionally takes me along for the morning bite.

Skagit, Skykomish, North Fork of the Stillaguamish, South Fork of the Stilly, Snoqualmie, it didn't much matter as long as there was the possibility of catching a steelhead. But so far, that exquisite joy had eluded me.

Cast, reel, Zzzzing! Is there any other way to describe the sound of fishing line being stripped off the reel despite the drag? Zzzzing! Fish on!

The fish breaks water for the first time as I fumble to release the brake. The sight of it takes my breath away: a real beauty. It crosses my mind for a nano-second to wonder if there has ever been an ugly steelhead.

Dad responds to the sound of slapping water as the fish reenters its natural clime. "Don't horse him!" he bellows.

"I'm not horsing him," I yell back. "He's horsing me!" The fish begins his run for it while my heart rate accelerates to hummingbird speed.

The advice keeps coming. "Give him some slack! Let him run! Keep the tip up!"

Stumbling backwards among the river rock, I keep the tension constant, praying the hook is set securely enough to stay set.

The fish puts up an exhilarating fight, but I feel him tire and I take advantage of the moment by turning the handle a few cranks. I keep backing and am rewarded by the sight

of his dorsal fin, then the top half of his tail, moving in between the rocks at river's edge. Almost mine.

The thought is no sooner formed than the fish gives another violent full-body shake. My line goes slack as the lure flies free.

"NO!" Too late I realize the mistake of having an excessive amount of line out; too much distance between me and my quarry. I drop the pole and try to run in what now feels like 40 pound cement waders. The steelhead quickly wriggles back toward the safety of deep water.

"Dad!" I holler. He has been working his way toward me, but I am still closer to the fish than he is, so it's all up to me.

I run in slow motion, feeling like a spectator watching the drama unfold. I get to the fish as he flicks his tail toward final freedom and I lunge at his retreating back. I end up on sorely bruised knees, straddling my first steelhead, laughing, crying, completely winded, and experiencing one of the most satisfying moments of my life.

Dad arrives beside me and leans forward, placing both hands on his knees, gasping for air. "You did great," he finally says, patting me on the shoulder. "Just great."

"Thanks." I wait until he has a firm grip through the gills of my prize before taking his free hand and staggering to my feet. "I caught it, but you can clean it."

"Deal," says Dad.

Long before the fog has given first thought to releasing its grip on the cape, the single-file procession heads seaward. Northwest, then Southwest, and finally due West to the open water, they follow the channel markers. Rippling rainbow oil slicks trail aimlessly behind.

Sleepy-eyed children pull their sweatshirt hoods down close around their ears. The rhythmic rocking of the boats soon lulls the little ones back to dreams of fish to be caught later on.

The dawn and waves break silently together.

That tolling bell, like a beautiful singing siren, lures them all to the edge. Hushed voices in the clearing mist jockey their mounts for post position. The hypnotic humming of idling engines drones monotonously as the hive of bees rally around their queen, the monolithic buoy at the river's mouth.

The muted morning is abruptly shattered. Shouts of "Fish on!" ring out. The battle cry sounds repeatedly over the water as the floating mass of humanity reels in their prized salmon. Tangled lines, broken leaders, malfunctioning motors and muttered oaths give the term "sportsmanship" a whole new meaning.

In a few short hours the tide changes and the day's catch is tallied.

The red and green channel lights lend to the holiday spirit when the bite is on. Traveling homeward it's red, right, returning. Gulls follow the boats, hoping to snag an easy meal of leftover bait being tossed. The chatter is lively and animated.

The same children who were bundled groggily onto the boats now enthusiastically jump up and down, waving to those who wait ashore. The ear-to-ear grins foretell the fish they will proudly hold up for picture taking at dockside.

With evening comes a last cup of coffee, liberally laced with whiskey, which helps to embellish the stories of the one that got away. Then a handshake, slap on the back, and promises of "see you next year" echo in the emptying port. Each boat shakes itself of water and climbs upon its trailer for the trip home.

The West Coast still welcomes them all – fisherman, adventurer and fortune seeker. Not much has changed. In 1849 they came for gold; today they come for silvers.

The fog, like the garage door,
is lifting as I wheel my bicycle
into the morning.

Mother Swallow fretfully eyes me.
Am I from the Chinese Family Commission
come to scold her for one too many children?

"Well, you do have," I say. "It's the same every year-
one gets crowded from your nest.
Won't you ever learn?"

A few dawn surfers sit becalmed on their
boards waiting for the ocean's swell to rise.
The wind lifts and drops their voices.

Carpenters debarking from huge pickups,
coffee mugs in hand, recite the morning ritual,
"Hey man, how ya' doin."

From the backdoor of the pub, the morning cook
tosses burnt toast to the river ducks. He quacks,
they answer. A game they play day in, day out.

Inky comma cormorants dive for their breakfasts
then surface, gulping flashes of silver-
in earlier times, an impossible privilege.

School buses, delivery trucks, early shift workers
Pass me by but peddling along, I feel as freed of the
workaday world as the cormorant does of the neck ring.



ANAGAMA MAMA

Designers: Cilla Russell, Gillian Hall, Richard Rowland

Model: Cilla Russell, **Photographer:** David Lee Myers

Lying in bed the other night I heard fog horns. We don't hear fog horns very often, but when we do, they sound like they are in the front yard. A long belch, a yawning burp. Awwwww-ohhhh. And then an answering burp from further away. The nearer voice sounds like it has strayed to this side of Sand Island, but can't be – there'd be alarms of all sorts, because a ship with a voice this loud would surely be aground if in the old north channel.

From our docks, Sand Island seems only a stone's throw away, an easy row for an experienced oarsman. My dad told me he used to row there when he was a teenager. Maybe this summer I'll get my neighbor John to take me. John, like my dad, is a fastidious fisherman. I like both elements – the fisherman part, but especially the fastidiousness when it comes to boats. I feel safe on a boat where maintenance has been taken to an art form. That careful beauty is something easy for me, an ignorant passenger, to observe, but perhaps I can be fooled by a tidy boat, fooled into thinking the engine, running gear, and safety equipment are all in order. The remains of our fishing fleet, however, especially the old trollers, aren't well-maintained.

Twenty years ago it was Garibaldi, Oregon, on Tillamook Bay, that had boats like these, certainly not Ilwaco or Westport, the great salmon ports of Washington with "easy" access to the ocean. I put easy in quotes, because crossing any bar at the wrong time or tide can be life threatening. Ilwaco, although it is tucked just inside one of the most dangerous river entrances in the world, was always a prosperous place, while Garibaldi had it tough. Garibaldi had lots of fish to catch but a hard time getting to them.

Five rivers flow into Tillamook Bay, five rivers calling out to homing salmon, five rivers dropping silt from the clear-cut hillsides of the Coast Range into the bay – famous rivers for steelhead, salmon, and ruggedness: Trask, Wilson, Tillamook, Kilchis, and Miami. Shipping into Tillamook Bay stopped long ago and so did dredging the bar. The Bayocean spit, dividing Tillamook Bay from the Pacific, seemed undecided about whether to be land or part of the sea – accreting and promising for human use a hundred years ago, turning into a series of lonely dunes and ponds fifty years later. Nearly breached by storms, its sand also contributed to the filling of the bay.

With all that sand and silt, the channel became more circumspect, unintelligible, except to the seasoned hand. My dad summed it up simply: "Can't make any money, too hard to get out," meaning a spot of rough weather would keep the Garibaldi fishermen home when boats from other ports could still get out to fish. Now even boats from easier

ports look like Garibaldi's derelicts, there are so few fish to find. Our hand on the land has had its impact.

Now the foghorn voices come not from the old river channel, the natural bend and flow of the Columbia that dropped islands here and there and laid a beach at Ilwaco's doorstep, but from a new channel plowed into the river bottom and out between jetties to the open sea. A constant task, picking up the river bottom and throwing it overboard further on.

I'm told the channel bottom is clean as a hound's tooth, scraped and scoured to a smooth, lifeless surface that provides no catch hold for any living thing. This speeds the flow of the river so silt can't drop out. It speeds the flow of traffic, too, right past these old river-based communities. The old islands are still there, along with new ones formed by dredging spoils. "Spoils" is a good name for them because truly they are part of despoiling a place. A blanket of spoils kills whatever was underneath and sometimes creates a home for something new and unintended that brings another set of problems.

The sound of foghorns – their reality is different from my romantic notions. Big ships heading for Portland and Longview are part of a demand for more and more competitive ports, bigger and bigger ships, and deeper and deeper channels, passing us by. We're becoming a sleepy village, on a backwater of an old estuary, our activities muffled by fog, waiting for a return to prosperity that may never come.

As a child I swam in Spirit Lake at the base of the volcano, Mt. St. Helens. There were trees upright, under the water, ghosts from some ancient cataclysmic event. It was a spooky place, where loons cried and owls called. At night, fog in the moonlight, rose in eerie swaying shapes.

When the mountain went off again, I drove to Woodland to get a closer look. My seven year-old granddaughter had helped me figure out my digital camera. Sixteen years ago, in the big eruption, the ash fall blew south, smothering my new cucumber plants. We put pantyhose over the car air filter. Pharmacies sold out of surgical masks. Children and pets stayed indoors. Fortunately, this time the ash was blowing north.

The drive itself was green and rolling, maples turning spring yellow, fields of mustard and wild radish. The weather was partly cloudy. I couldn't see the mountain, but a large ash plume was roiling upward in the distance.

I found a muddy turn-out by a farm field, pulled over, got out, and began snapping pictures. "What a National Geographic moment," I thought. Across the field I saw a man approaching. A farmer perhaps.

"What are you doing?" he said.

"I hope I'm not trespassing... I'm filming the mountain. It's going off you know."

"Well, I hate to tell you this, lady, but that's not the volcano. You're filming the Camas Pulp Mill."

"Oh no!"

"Oh yes. Don't feel bad, you're not the only one." said the farmer.

Two crows
black as fir shadows,
hop from branch to branch,
one with a wisp of pale lichen,
the other offering
a creamy grub.
They brush soft heads together,
touch beaks.
He splays his wings
a blue hint
of iridescence.
Silently they disappear
into a tangled spruce,
where weeks soon,
will emanate,
a litany
of pitiful beggings
all
 day
 long.

Sweet roadside graces, blackberries
with your tuck-and-roll bodies, your
color deep as a pupil. When you offer

your life blood, I cannot refuse,
when you say take a risk, I step on in.
Blackberries, tastiest when briars tug

at your jeans, when you incline and try
each variant fruit. This one grown bitter
through trial, this one heavy with rain,

this one dry as a sobered drunk. I touch
them till I find one soft and ready, one
that bursts in my mouth like a sun.

But oh the tangled menagerie
of shadow and green!

This summer I will not collect
blackberries, a jug of bounty to gather
frost in my freezer, to lose its cordial

taste in a chilled, white bowl. No,
I will stop at the roadside every
evening, eat only enough for today.

I will pick the berries like manna,
till they are a memory, a photo
tucked in the back of a book,
to return, seductive and warm, in season.

Great, great grandma was a Ute.
Obsidian hair, long and loose down
her back, bare-ankled beauty, buckskin
dress and nothing underneath. Shame

to my Victorian-white relations who forgot
her. Her husband, their rebel-white son,
“went native,” lived on a rez till he died, long
after her young passing, after the birth

of my great-grandmother, who he also
outlived. My Ute grandma, casting long
native shadows where remembrance should be.
She would have believed her grandmas’ spirits

hovered where she walked, spoke to her.
But if she has spoken to me, I have not listened.
Now I listen and wonder, look for her in the curve
of my face, ever-turned to the wild, in the hump

of my nose, my summer-brown skin. All
I have are her drops of blood in me, a census
scrawled “Nancy”, my Nana’s firm word.
I cannot dance the Ute Bear Dance or say

my great, great grandmother’s prayers. Too much
stolen already – by white men, by white women
like me. No, I will honor her in my bear-hug
embrace of the living, in bearing the sag

and softness of body and soul. No white-
woman corset-consciousness for me. I have
her blood in my veins – a thin thread
coursing through me like the Rio Grande.

The pressure in my chest felt like indigestion, a big bubble that wouldn't pop, pressing harder and harder against my rib cage, my lungs, my heart. Like childbirth – but too high up. I wondered if I would stop breathing. Was a blood clot trying, at this very moment, to wriggle through the valves of my heart, like those children struggling up the moving stairways and whirling tunnels in the Fun House at the fair? I remembered that heart attacks were often believed, at first, to be bouts of indigestion. Meanwhile the pressure on my chest became nearly unbearable. Claustrophobic.

I moved from the computer onto the couch and, kneeling there, hung upside down onto the floor trying somehow to relieve the pressure. I put my forearms together and rested my head on them. A strange sort of yoga headstand. I dangled there wondering whom I should call if it got worse? Would I black out, become incapable of reaching the phone, die there on the spot? Maybe the phone would ring just now, Claire, from California, with yet another distracting story from the frontlines of life-as-a-single-woman. She would listen politely to my crisis, offer advice and then demand equal time.

Suddenly I realized the computer was still online. So the telephone wasn't even working. Should I call Wayne and ask what he had experienced while he was having his heart attack? But I didn't want to worry friends, upset neighbors. Karen... was gone to Olympia; Susan M away, as usual, on her horse outings; Susan P up in Washington on retreat; Paula or Eddie too far away to come quickly in a real emergency; Sandra wouldn't answer her phone anyway. No one but my dear Christopher to truly help me – that is if he were at home and awake. Yet he didn't even have a car unless his girlfriend was there too. The thought of my young son – calm, concerned, practical and caring sustained me. I knew he would come immediately if I called him. I sat up again and was relieved to notice that my feet were still clean from the hot bath yesterday – just in case.

And then the question of insurance! The huge cost Christopher had born (he could have repaired his car) for lying a couple of hours in the emergency room, largely untreated and ignored. The pills that arrogant doctor prescribed to stop the vomiting... \$50 a piece! And earlier, driving Rajes to that same hospital while she clutched her heart and tried to be brave. All those expensive tests to inform her finally that she was probably "under some stress". No wonder with the disastrous "arranged marriage" of her only child. Sri Lankan intrigue beyond the wildest soap scenario. Retouched photos, scheming relatives and devious astrologers. Oh, why haven't I done my taxes?! Then I could apply for the low-income health insurance like a responsible poor person.

Meanwhile the pain worsened. I moved to the floor and instinctively crouched there trying to breathe deeply, monitoring the pain levels second by second. What would Dr. Weil advise? The carpet smelled strongly of dust. Was my heart damaged or still whole? Another notch was cinched beyond the first as I tried again to sit up. I quickly hunched back over. Should I try and take my own pulse? How would I do that? What would I look for anyway? I began to concentrate on simply being still and breathing slowly, as deeply as the pressure would allow. In. Pause. Out. Further out.

Just then I turned my head slightly and was startled to see that Loki had crept quietly up next to my side. He lay there silently, lending support, his dark eyes expressing his concern. Overcome I threw my arms around him and burst into tears. I told him how frightened and vulnerable I felt, releasing my feelings for the first time. A seismic shift from head to heart. My tears covered his fur and wet the tousled hair in my face. He lay still under my embrace. Never once in over 7 years had he risked entering the “forbidden territory” of my study. Ever since the blue carpet was put in place he had been banned from the back room. He had never violated this rule. Until today. At that moment I loved him with all my heart. My dear friend. My dog.

The pressure began to lessen and I crawled into the hallway. I stood up after awhile. As we walked into the kitchen I saw the amber glass pan on the stove glowing red, empty of water. It was stuck fast to the burner, still on high. I clicked it off but made no attempt to separate them. A melody from the radio upstairs floated down to my ears, “Teeeeell me, eeev-rything’s – gonna be all right.” Loki stayed close by my side as we moved past the dining room table toward the front door. What was it I had dreamt of accomplishing? Of what importance my drawings, the glass, my scribbling, my bears, the puzzle of my life? As my bare feet trod the worn fir boards I passed in and out of warm sunlit patches.

Outside the air smells of warm earth and dry brown grasses, blackberries and bruised apples. I flip a piece of dark berry-stained bird droppings from the cushion onto the dusty porch floor, then move from sitting to lying down on the shabby wicker couch. A raucous jay scolds me sharply. Even Loki turns his head to search out her bright feathers somewhere within the green shade of the pear tree. Every summer she brings her fledglings here to teach them how to steal the cat’s food. (No sign of the cat.) Anything left in the dish by nightfall is consumed by raccoons, the aromatic skunks or an occasional shuffling opossum. Loki barks frantically at them practically every night, traditionally just after I have fallen asleep. The hummingbirds’ fresh sugar-water is almost empty. What delicate chimes are those rocked by this little breeze? I remember lying in Grandma Grace’s plaid hammock, the lush green grass of her back yard enclosed by tall hedges, the secret passage into Mrs. Sterrick’s back yard. The sky – a perfect blue – like today. I can hear the plaintive call of the mourning doves, from Grandma’s huge bed under the

slanting eaves of the attic room. Flowered wallpaper. And the smell of such sweet juicy peaches she is slicing into the small creamy bowl with pink flowers, just for me. I wonder if I might have enough money in my bank account to buy a hammock. I guess not.

Eventually wandering back into the house I sit down again at the computer. I begin to write. A long slow burp bumbles up from the nether regions to rejoin the atmosphere—then another. Ahh. It must have been that succulent half-a-watermelon I gobbled down earlier this morning. Sigh. The phone rings. It's Claire, from California.



MADAME
Cheryl Garrett

On the banks of the Skipanon
Mouth of the mighty Columbia in view
Water lapping
Sunshine basking
With a snake who shouldn't like sand, but seeks the heat,
Stretched red stripe straight.
My legs extended, I lean back on my log perch
Assessing the standoff.

As I sit,
Abbey stands
Shoulder deep in water
Pointing, poised, pleading,
Waiting for me to throw a stick.
My sturdy lab loves to fetch but hates the rules.

Instead of returning anything to me,
She races after thrown sticks for personal gratification
Taking them to a collection out of my reach;
Sometimes gnawing them to tiny pieces
Before she even emerges from the river,
A brown blur pelting on the sand
Water dripping off her fur,
Always aimed for me.
Eighty pounds of dog,
Ten pounds of water to brush against my calf.

The last stick was eaten minutes ago
She expects me to throw another one.
This is not a game of give and take
She just wants more from me.
I must be the resourceful one
To continue the game.

She smiles expectantly, panting,
Ready to stand in the icy water forever
Waiting for me to produce the next one from thin air.
I try to tell her, "If you don't bring
Something back to me,
I'll have nothing left to throw."
I am to blame for this, having
Accommodated her whims many times before.

Today I have nothing left to give.

She mouths small floating stick bits
Before she looks, once again,
To me
To perpetuate this game we play,
While a gull soars overhead,
Cackling at our predicament.

When seven letters from Publisher's Clearing House arrived in the mail on July 7, Roger decided it was time to buy a lottery ticket. Admittedly, only one of the letters was addressed to him, but this simply increased the oddity of the event. He had purchased the two-story dilapidation he described to his co-workers as a "fixer-upper" from a landlord tired of renting to college students. The last batch, two young men and a woman, had moved out only hours before Roger signed the deed, leaving cigarette-burned, beer-stained carpets and a ventilator system that smelled vaguely of vomit. None of the three had left a forwarding address or notified the post office of their move, presumably to eradicate their lives of all paperwork. On a daily basis, Roger received Victoria's Secret, Brooks Brothers, and J Crew catalogs, bills and bank statements along with more technology flyers than he knew what to do with. He did not understand what an iPod did, but he had been offered special deals on chargers, cords, speakers, and something called "skins." He could not imagine why a piece of equipment would require skin.

The previous tenants must have shared a penchant for Publishers' Clearing House because each one had received two letters, each letter addressed to a variant of the tenant's real name. The young man, who usually received mail as Max Gant, had one addressed to M. Gant and the other to Maxwell Gant Jr. There were also letters for Kimi Hastings, Ms. Kimberly Pearce-Hastings, Thomas Johnson, and TJ Johnson. The last letter was addressed to Mr. Roger Nordquist, the only one who had filled out a change of address form, and the only current occupant of 7 Downing Lane.

Roger closed the mailbox on the stoop and shuffled back into his house, his 900-square-foot, three-bedroom mansion. After years of living in studio apartments, three bedrooms seemed like a luxury, even if one of the bedrooms was currently uninhabitable because of the pungent smell of cat spray. He still had two bedrooms, a living room/kitchen/dining room, and a bathroom all to himself. Everything needed work – there were soft spots in the floor, roaches in the broken kitchen cabinets, and a plumbing system that the realtor had called "antique." Roger figured he had plenty of time: he was sixty, close to retiring from his job at the local thrift store. He loved helping those handicapped kids learn job skills; Nancy, his boss, thought he was perfect because he explained things slowly and in an orderly fashion. Roger did everything in a slow and orderly fashion. He would miss the thrift store when he retired, but he looked forward to having time to fix his house. If he won the lottery, he wouldn't have to wait until his social security kicked in at sixty-five.

Roger placed six of the letters from Publisher's Clearing House in the three boxes marked "Max", "Kim", and "Tom" that occupied a large portion of his dining room table. Originally he had kept every scrap that came for each of them, but as multiple boxes became required, Roger weeded out all of the solicitations and left only the bills, statements, and other letters. Tom had hardly anything in his box, while Kim had received multiple bank statements. None of the students had contacted Roger to inquire about missing mail.

He sat down at the table and looked at the last letter – the one addressed to him. He opened the envelope and scanned the print. The drawing was not until August. He didn't need any magazines; he'd submit his entry without making a purchase. They said in the fine print that he could do that. Today was his lucky day, but he didn't expect to win Publisher's Clearing House. What good were signs if he wasn't going to pay attention to them? The day that seven letters showed up on the doorstep of number seven on the seventh day of the seventh month was meant to be lucky. But the drawing was not today. However, the LOTTO was being called tonight, at seven o'clock, incidentally, and Roger knew he would be buying the winning ticket. He just needed to decide how far to take the seven path. Should he buy seven tickets? Did he need to buy them from seven venues?

While pondering these questions, he retrieved a ten dollar bill from his bank in the freezer, folded it into the green leather wallet he purchased in 1986, and dropped the wallet into the front pocket of his shorts. He then pulled his well-worn copy of the yellow pages from the drawer below the kitchen counter and began looking for Seven Elevens.

When Roger couldn't sleep, he'd read from the yellow pages. In the beginning he would always start in the A section, but he became exceedingly bored with attorneys and decided that he had the right to start wherever he wanted. That proved to be too bold an idea, so he compromised by beginning with a new letter each time he needed to read something to get to sleep. He had started at the Bs and worked through to the Os. He hadn't finished the Bs and was excited to get back to see what came after "beauticians," another long entry. He found the Seven Eleven chain under "Convenience Stores," wrote down the four stores nearest his house, and pulled out a map.

He was surprised to find that none of the stores was seven blocks from his house. He opted to drive to the Seven Eleven twenty-one blocks away rather than walk to the one six blocks over, reasoning that the distance to the further one was divisible by seven. It would be easier to drive anyway, he reminded himself as he pulled his car keys from the hook and slid on some canvas shoes. His doctor strongly urged him to exercise, but Roger's knees and feet urged him otherwise. A walk to the car was plenty. He could never find a parking spot in front of his house and often had to park as far as a block away. As he stepped out of the house, he wondered if walking an extra block would make the distance

to the Seven Eleven twenty two blocks, and was relieved to find he had parked closer than he remembered.

Roger trudged down the front stairs, his bald head gleaming in the sunshine. The sun had burned off the morning mist, and as Roger leaned on the car, he pulled a handkerchief from his Bermuda shorts and wiped his mouth. The beads of perspiration on his forehead never seemed to tickle as much as the ones that formed below his nose. It was before 10 a.m. and the pits and back of his polo shirt were already wet.

"Hey Rodge," came a voice from across the street, "it looks to be a scorcher, doesn't it?" His neighbor Jerry was pruning his roses, preferring to work before the afternoon heat settled in. Roger waved his handkerchief in Jerry's direction and opened the car door, wondering why a lucky day for an overweight sixty-year-old couldn't involve a cold snap.

It was a 35 zone all the way to the Seven Eleven – not enough speed to catch a breeze, but enough to feel the air move through the open window. When Roger opened the door to the store, he felt an icy wall of air-conditioning push past him to dissipate into the parking lot, as if the temperature were too cold in the building even for the air. He took a deep breath and sighed happily as his skin turned to gooseflesh and the door swung closed behind him. He didn't ever seek air-conditioning – it had never occurred to him on hot days to go to a store, the mall, the movies, or anyplace that would offer a reprieve from the heat. Until this moment he had considered air-conditioning frivolous, but now he felt the cold soaking through his damp clothes and tingled with the excitement of his newly acquired luck. He decided to relish the moment, to draw it out and enjoy every morsel of the day right up to the instant when he would purchase that winning lottery ticket and ask for luck no further. He wasn't sure if his fortune was meant to last all day or if it was only to get him to the store to make his purchase, but he wanted more time and opted to cultivate the event into an experience.

He walked to the wall covered with fountain drinks and canteens of coffee. After consideration he selected a small, eight-ounce Styrofoam coffee cup. He was too hot for coffee, but the smallest paper cups for cold drinks were fourteen ounces, considerably more than he was prepared to drink. Roger hated waste. He took a ballpoint pen from his pocket and marked a horizontal line halfway up the outside of the cup, dividing it in half. He then proceeded to mark quarters and eighths along the cup. If he was going with sevens, he should do this right. He filled his cup to his hand-scrawled seven-ounce marker. He then shuffled to the counter and ordered a hot dog.

The woman at the counter handed over the dog, shifted her weight onto one leg and looked at him dispassionately, smacking her gum. "Zat it?" she mumbled, "A hot dog and an eight ounce coffee?"

"Seven ounces," Roger said.

"What?"

"I got seven ounces of iced tea. I'm not buying coffee."

The woman tipped her head slightly and looked at Roger for the first time. A long moment passed as she stared him in the eye. Roger held his breath.

"Whatever," She finally said, "Dog's ninety-nine and the drink's sixty-nine. Dollar sixty-eight."

Roger handed over his ten dollar bill and asked for eight dollars in ones. After another stare from the clerk, Roger walked with his soda and iced tea to a table by the window and sat to decide whether to purchase seven tickets or only one. Roger finished his food and nursed his drink as he considered – only one letter had come to him, so maybe only one lottery ticket was needed, on the other hand, seven did seem to be the number du jour. Twenty minutes passed. The clerk had taken no notice of him during this time but was now beginning to watch him warily. It was time. He had decided that one ticket would be enough, that fate had built the moment perfectly for him, and now only the timing was in question. Just as Roger was getting ready to walk up to the register, he heard the electronic beep of the establishment's door. A tall, lean man in blue jeans, a white t-shirt, and cowboy boots ambled into the store with a powerful grace. He stood in front of the register, hands on the counter, scanning the cigarettes. Roger couldn't see his face, but he could tell the man had made an impression on the clerk. She stood up straight and tossed her hair out of her eyes. The man asked for a package of Lucky Strikes and made a joke about how you had to consider yourself lucky if you were going to smoke unfiltered as he found his money in his front jeans pocket.

He placed payment for the cigarettes on the counter and looked down again. "Well, will ya look at this?" he said as he bent over and picked up something off of the floor, "A dollar. Guess I'd better buy a scratch game. I don't care which one. You pick." Roger looked at the dollar on the counter and then down at his own pocket. He pulled out all of his change and began counting it.

The clerk, obviously smitten, said, "Why don't you buy a LOTTO ticket? There's lots riding on it."

The man turned toward the door and smiled. Roger saw the side of his face and was distracted from counting by perfect white teeth and dimples.

"Nah," said the man, "I'd never think to check it. Guess I'm all about instant gratification."

The clerk sighed longingly as she handed the scratch card to the man, who bent over the counter to play.

"Hey, I won two bucks," he said as he stood up, "doubled my money, but didn't pay for the cigs. Shame. Think I'll stop while I'm ahead."

The clerk traded the card for two singles, and the man sauntered toward the door. He stopped in the entry and turned to the clerk, "It's funny. I thought I was having a terrible day. I was even ready to start smoking again. I quit in May." He tossed the pack of Lucky Strikes back to the counter and walked through the door; the electronic beep brought Roger back to the money in his hands.

He was holding seven singles. Had the stranger taken his one lucky dollar or had fate left him with seven lucky ones? Or was Roger holding six lucky dollars and one dud? Men like that, with perfect waistlines and teeth, always attracted lady luck. If one was within ten miles of Roger, he knew who would win at anything. For the first time since he had checked the mail, Roger's confidence faltered. He felt drained and slightly sad – he had been so close, had almost touched it, and it was gone. There was nothing left now but the ritual. He would buy a ticket, but luck had just walked out the door, arm in arm with the cowboy.

Roger took a deep breath, and pushed himself to stand. He gathered his cup and napkin and threw them in the garbage, brushing his hands instinctively on his shirt as if to remove imaginary crumbs. He put his hands in his pockets and walked cautiously up to the counter. The clerk now had a smile on her face and Roger noticed how much prettier she was when her features softened. He pulled out his wad of ones, straightened his shoulders, and said, "I'd like to buy one LOTTO ticket please."

"You actually do it by computer," the clerk said. "It's over there on the wall by the pop machines. You put your money in and either choose your numbers or let the computer choose for you."

Roger turned toward the machine on the wall as if he were facing a firing squad. Why such torture? He just wanted the whole day to be over. Machines flustered him more than just about anything. He felt abandoned.

And then he saw it. Next to the LOTTO machine, the soda refrigerator was covered a beautiful, five-foot tall, photo of a can of Seven Up. And for the first time in his life, Roger realized that lady luck could have more than one lover.

"You need help?" the clerk asked.

"No. No, I'm fine," smiled Roger.

As he took a step toward the machine, the clerk said, "Good luck."



ASTEROIDEA
David rr Homer

The door creaks open and a faint musty smell comes out to greet us. The house's way of telling us we are neglectful. Bags in hand we enter, happy to be here, but saddened by the knowledge that for one more year, we arrive knowing that all too soon, we must go. We sit our bags in the entry and walk into the living room.

Rituals mark the beginning, the ending of every visit. We open all of the curtains. Fog-diffused light bounces brightly off of walls, sinks softly into dark wooden panels and moldings. Ann goes to her piano and plays some scales to see if it needs tuning. I walk to the fireplace mantel to start the clock. An old wind-up mantel clock, round glass face with plain numbers and a dark-stained wooden case that sweeps down at the ends in classic mantel clock fashion. Built, like the house, at the beginning of the last century, when anything still seemed possible. It's adjusted well to life in the Pacific Northwest, as we hope to. I open the back, give the pendulum a nudge. The countdown begins.

The ancient Greeks spoke of two types of time. Most people know the first one, *Chronos*, which is measured time: tick tock. *Kairos* is more difficult to grasp. It is defined as "the propitious moment;" or knowing when it is the right time to act. Chronos is physical time; Kairos, metaphysical time. It is Chronos that we dread on our visits, as it ruthlessly counts down, tick-tock. It is Kairos that we embraced when we planned our escape from Los Angeles.

I finish setting the clock. Turn the hour hand to 12, pause for the hour chime, then to six, pause for the half-hour chime. The clock has a sound that fits the house. When away from Astoria, longing for it, I start the clock in my mind – and I'm there. Rain on a window, clock ticking, steam rising from a cup. When the chime is struck, the warm tone fills the house. The sound is nostalgic and a little sad, but I like the reminder of passing time. The ticking pendulum seems to say *carpe diem*, and the hourly ringing a gentle but firm *memento mori*. There is an asymmetrical "tick, tock-tick, tock-tick," that travels through the air, but also fills the clock case with sound, like a musician tapping the beat on the body of a guitar, reverberating through the wooden mantel, into the wall studs, through the floor and ceiling joists to the hardwood floors, filling the house with the rich sound of passing time, filling us with knowledge of kairos, our wisely chosen moment.

When I tell anyone from Los Angeles that we're moving to Oregon, the first response is usually, "Oh, it's really beautiful there." Then their dry Southern California brow furrows, the voice lowers, and they say, "but it rains a lot there, doesn't it?" At this point in the conversation, a soft smile and faraway look wash over my face. "Yes, yes it does rain there a

lot.”

It rains a lot. It makes the whole world green and lush and dark and beautiful. It makes the air taste fresh. The rain makes you want to go for a walk to take in the sounds and sights and smells of it, and when you return home, it makes the fire seem warmer, and the coffee taste better. It adds a modicum of adversity to daily activities to keep senses sharper. The rain moisturizes hair and lips, makes kisses feel better, and makes hair feel like silk. It rains a lot.

Ann is always as sad to leave as I am, and is somewhat annoyed by my sulking when we return to L.A. After all, we're fortunate to have a house in West Los Angeles with its ocean breezes and cool, relatively clean air. Our L.A. house, at the end of a dead-end street, half-way down the side of a quiet canyon at the very end of the Santa Monica Mountain chain is a great place to live, and I've been happier here than anywhere else I've lived in my life, yet I can't wait to live in Oregon, and it shows in everything I do and say. We stand looking out over the canyon through the palm trees at a sunset made beautiful by a petrochemical haze, and she says, "it's not so bad here, is it." "No," I say "not so bad," trying not to sound too depressed and selfish. Life in L.A. has been good, but Astoria is where I prefer to be.

A few turns through town, walks through forest, parties with friends, and all too soon it's the night before the last day. Careful now; this is when we both get grumpy and sad about leaving. One misplaced word can hurt feelings or start an argument that will leave us both feeling even sadder that we've wasted some of our precious Astoria time in anger. Careful with words. The clock sounds as we go to sleep for the last night.

Bags are packed and by the door. We say goodbye to the house in which we've invested so much, emotionally and physically. We say goodbye to the town that we hope to entrust the rest of our lives to, and we wonder as we go -- will all go according to plan? Will we live here soon? Will the dogs get used to the rain? Will we be happy here? Will we find that Kairos has served us well, or will Chronos take us before our well-laid plans are complete?

"Soon. Very soon now," I say quietly as I stop the clock's pendulum. The house fills once more with silence. The door creaks a sad goodbye as I pull it closed.

She came at me like a barn on fire
that fire of three nights
more constant than a lover
her orange pregnant belly framed by rafters
of aromatic pines, a totally forgotten
appointment I happened to make
by accident, being suddenly homeless
and outdoors at the local lover's overlook,
my tarp on the soft grass and me waiting
for what I assumed would be melancholia
As I gaped she slipped out of the rafters,
Slimmed down to a size thirteen
and put on something silvery.
All the while, like a discarded slipper,
her reflection lapped lapped lapped
and I struggled to mind the alignment,
prophecied by eons of millers and romantics
but which I, being neither, had hitherto
blithely ignored, but now it was my visitation,
a grace appointed and lovely.

Here on the coast, in the season of storms,
the first office of the winter is succession;
a burying office, fading last year
into a cycle of all years, one like another

There is a tendency of weather
the fill in the lowlands, and mist
to occlude the hills
sometimes the power goes off.

Usually, when we are in the middle
of things. We then we draw inward
mooring ourselves to our own devices
(usually, reading by candlelight)
and in a sense, to our own houses of undoing.

This year we awoke to hear that a million
lost power in Seattle, from
Southern Oregon to Idaho
I was surprised to have to share it,
this suddenly huge house of rain.

Those trees across the street from my office,
with blossoms that plump like popped corn in the spring,
are the same that lined the street of my boyhood.
Every May the petals fell like confetti
and were swept into snowdrifts by the wind.

The trees lining both sides of three city blocks
were planted 50 years ago by my father and neighbors,
the people who first bought and built on the land.

They still blossom a daring pink against black spring rain clouds
that, like ships laden with cargo and returning from long trips at sea,
fulfill for this land a promise of eternal fertility.

They are an ancient display, these pink fireworks,
meant to please the gods of rain, who,
vanquishing foes and conquering this land,
made it their own forever.

El Rayo

La luna de la noche en el cielo
durante el mes de mayo,
comienza a dar un paseo
con su nuevo blanco rayo.

Yo duermo... tengo un sueño,
pero el súbito movimiento
me despierta, y yo miro
el rayo aquí, bailando en mi espejo.

Moonbeam

The moon in the night sky
during the month of May
begins to turn and sashay
with its new white ray.

I'm sleeping, deep in dream,
until a sudden movement
awakens me, and I see
the moonbeam dancing in my mirror.



INK LANDSCAPE
Devan Gill

Only a few blocks away
but separated by a
thousand miles of the heart.

A universe altered by
divorce court decree.
Where distance holds no

relation to closeness;
where hearts that once
occupied the same

space, became victims
of geometry akimbo,
and no intersecting

lines remain. All that's
left... is to battle
against twisted physics...

or walk away alone.

Bright flash off black wings
undeterred by waddle and caw.

A mystic messenger moving
effortlessly between eternities,

dispensing foreknowledge slyly.

Is it good news or bad... to
know the moment of departure?

Whether bullet or fortuitous event,

both will purchase passage to
an... any other where but here.

And you ask... "tell me old one...
is it today?"

Peering at me searchingly,
he moves with preordained
strides and a final flutter to
mount the fence, stare at me,

and wink.

After a silver storm
Frozen poplars brush fog
On shivering hills.



CONTOURS
Kenneth Benton

Oh the desert I'm sure
Holds a real fine allure
Tumbleweeds tumblin'
Cactus in the sun
But there's no sand for me
Like the sand of the sea
The coastline may be faulty
But it's free, wild, and salty

And the mist caresses the treetops
Rain soaks the ground

Now the prairie can be
Like a bright golden sea
Buffalo roamin'
Amber waves of grain
But give me a home
Where the land meets the foam
You could say it's wetter
But I feel so much better

Where the mist caresses the tree tops
Rain soaks the ground

Oh, the city's alright
Like a big neon light
Nightclubs and restaurants
All the sights, sounds, and smells
But they just can't compare
With the smell of the air
Fresh off the ocean
Puts my spirit in motion

When the mist caresses the treetops
Rain soaks the ground

Oh the mountains so high
They poke a hole in the sky
Snowboards and climbers
Lovely scenery
Though I do love to go
And play in the snow
I'd much rather revel
Down here at sea level

Where the mist caresses the treetops
Rain soaks the ground.

In the backyard where
wind catches and wakes the trees,
rabbit is asleep.

Over by the nameless bush,
the deer take their moonlit walk.

Southwest wind at night
wrestles the plants by the door,
they rattle greenly.

It takes time to realize
why the cat shies from my hands.

Big blue heron lands
on top of the neighbor's roof.
It looks at home there.

Moist dense clouds scatter the rain;
too late in the year to snow.

Clouds pucker up and—
surprise! The street is white with
beginnings of spring.

After classes, eager to see the bombed
American Embassy, my friends and I walk fast
along La Corniche, the promenade by the sea,
chattering in schoolgirl French as we go, giggling,
pretending this will keep
anyone passing us from knowing
we are Americans. When we find
just a few twisted window frames, shattered
glass, we are disappointed,
we expected more excitement. We have no sense
of what will soon begin, the Six Days War
eruption of blood, the future and the past
rushing together like a falling
stone and the still, waiting earth. We,
like our teachers, have learned nothing
from our studies in Ancient History.
Next week we will be evacuated
from boarding school in Beirut to Rome's safe
haven, where our parents will send frantic
telegrams and airplane tickets to deliver us
back to the States. Now
all we feel is salt breeze blowing
from the cornflower-blue Mediterranean,
stroking our ignorance-flushed young cheeks.

"LIFE WHERE 9/11 IS 24/7"

OR, SUPPOSE OUR FAR WEST WAS LIKE THE MIDDLE EAST

Charles A. Hillestad

For the last half century, relatively few Americans have ever experienced anything like 9/11 first hand. A few million or so were close enough to ground zero in New York to smell and hear it as it happened. A few thousand in Oklahoma City lived sufficiently near to the Federal Building to have their windows blown out when Timothy McVey decided to show how Americans can be good at terrorism too. A few hundred were in the Colorado and Oregon high schools when kids went on random shooting sprees. A few dozen have been unfortunate enough to witness bombings of abortion clinics or hear the supersonic crack of a serial sniper's bullet. These were terrifying terrorism events, each and every one, but in this country at least, they are noteworthy for both their rarity and short duration.

Granted, they were life disrupting events as well as life ending for some. They scared and scarred TV spectators far and near as well as the original unwilling participants. At the same time, for the most part, other than the lost loved ones and perhaps traumatic stress syndrome, "everything" was not changed. For the most part, any change was only a few days or weeks or months in length except for comparatively minor aspects of daily life. Taking off shoes in airport lines. Metal detectors at the courthouse.

The anguish, no doubt, is still there, undiminished, for many families, but frankly, an observer from another planet would be hard pressed to see much physical difference in the daily conduct of American life, especially out here on our West Coast. People still go to malls, stand in line at the cineplex, attend concerts. People still open their front doors to total strangers and do not have bomb shelters or buried supplies. The blood and bandages, the debris and dead children are far, far away.

Suppose we weren't so lucky? Suppose the destruction happening "over there" in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Palestine and Israel and pictured so graphically on our nightly broadcasts and at the newsstand was happening "over here"? An unpleasant thought. Decidedly so. However, as unspeakable as the events pictured on daily news may be, we do need to speak about them.

Here is a mental exercise for you. A necessary one. Think about the unthinkable in concrete terms, real concrete. Imagine the same level of violence taking place on the concrete streets in your own USPO zip code. Forget, just for the moment, what Hollywood star is sleeping with whom. Picture instead what is happening in the Middle East, happening to you and yours where you can see it outside your front door.

Having a hard time visualizing it? Then, imagine you are afraid to go to the “Safe” way for food because someone in the checkout line next to you may detonate a bomb. Imagine your nearest Target store in the target sights of a military jet. Imagine armed guards frisking you at the doorways of Albertsons, now windowless with huge concrete barriers out front so that truck bombers can’t crash through the entry. Even if you’re able to shop without interference, there might not be any food because of blockades or bombed out roads or fearful farmers not working the field. Imagine the mighty Fred Meyer grocery chain with endless row upon row of empty shelves.

Imagine the blemished apples or even the rotting rutabaga never making it to the dumpster. Imagine harvesting the dandelion leaves from your lawn because you need them in your salad. Imagine a growling in your stomach that seldom stops. Imagine little children with ribs prominently showing. If there is edible food on the shelves, black market war profiteers make it so expensive you cannot afford it.

Imagine sorting through your possessions to see what you can barter or sell. Imagine what you are willing to do to put food on the table. Sorry, the Bank of America ATMs don’t work anymore. Snipers might have the cash box in their cross hairs. No, E-bay is not interested in your Beanie Baby collection. E-bay is not working anymore. “Your internet is out.”

You can’t even go to church on the weekend to pray it will all stop. The white bell tower is an obvious aiming point for others who don’t like your particular choice of religion. Bingo. Or, once you get to church, you may discover your priest or pastor was killed. Or, worse, you might hear your own pastor, in all his finery, preaching about how the [Catholics][Lutherans][or the Mormons] are plotting against you, how they are going to Hell anyway. Praise your version of the Lord and pass the ammunition with the collection plate so to speak. “Do unto others before they do unto you” is the new rule. Besides, “They started it first.”

Some, in the Middle East are interpreting the Koran’s wording as allowing bombing of others. And, a distressing percentage of them seem to be trained “ordained” religious leaders. What’s that you say? You believe only the leaders of Muslim religion variants ever say such horrific things or encourage or justify killings? You don’t think “our” Christian churches would ever be a party to such “un-Christian” behavior as killing “heretics”? Hmm, read some history books and wonder if Joan of Arc or Oliver Cromwell or Richard the Lion Hearted, Christians all remember, would agree. Heck, we have well-known and apparently admired TV evangelists who, this past year, advocated assassinations. Bet they were standing near a copy of the 10 Commandments when they said it too and probably clutching a Bible.

If attending church is dangerous, then how about a Regal movie theater for a tempo-

rary escape? The Rotary Club luncheon perhaps? The Seaside Public Library to quietly read a magazine? Hanging out at the beach? Forget it. Assembled crowds equal opportunities for a perfectly ordinary looking someone to punctuate his religious or political statements. Is "beer belly" guy brooding at the end of the bar in the local McMenamin's just fat? Or does he have a row of dynamite strapped around his waist?

Should you send your children to school? Schools are targets, and so are the principals and teachers for what they teach or even daring to teach. Period. Certainly no Friday night football. No basketball tournament. Well, what about home schooling you say? Okay. What books? Do you have them already? Don't expect UPS to deliver new ones.

It wouldn't be much fun staying at home either if our Far West was the Middle East. No heat in Winter. No air conditioning in Summer where cool coastal towns bubbled in 103 degree heat recently. No electricity means no power from Pacific Power. No refrigerator to store food (assuming you have any). Of course, no gas from Northwest Natural Gas means little is available to cook it anyway. Does that Coleman Camper in the attic still work? You better hope so.

There's probably no water to cook with, at least not clean water, water you can count on without thinking as we do now. That faithful faucet might become merely an ornament on the sink. Maybe you'll still be drinking "mineral water," but you probably won't like the minerals in it, let alone the nasty bugs that are no longer filtered out at the water treatment plant. Those and the pipelines and conduits supplying your water are always targets of choice.

Maybe you have a well or a nearby stream. Great, assuming no one else covets it. Your great grandparents used to dig wells and divert streams. Can you? Of course, that still doesn't solve the issue of what's in the water? Can you test it in any way except with your own lower gastrointestinal tract? Yeah, boiling is a good idea as you recall from your Boy Scout Handbook, but you're probably reduced to doing so at a wood fire since the gas and electricity no longer function. Keep in mind, you have to depend on others to keep those utilities working. And, they have the same problems you do.

By the way, got an ax or saw and a means to sharpen them if no gas or electricity? That wood doesn't cut itself. It's long, hard work even if you do have cutting tools. There's one bright spot. You would have more free time to do it since you no longer go out for fun. No need for a gym membership.

The toilet is probably not working, not with either the sewer lines being blown up or the sewage treatment plant itself. Easy to destroy. Hard to repair.

So, get used to the stink. And, not just how your own body or the communal outhouse or slit trench smells. Wait till you learn what the smell of dead bodies is like after they spend a few weeks crushed under a collapsed building. It's something your nostrils

will never forget. Same for the cloying smell of burned bodies. Have you ever even seen a dead body, let alone smell one? How about thousands at once?

Well, there's always watching "Desperate housewives" on the telly, right? Wrong. There's desperate housewives aplenty, but not on TV. No KMUN or OPB radio either. Towers get targeted. And, what news arrives tends to be propaganda for somebody. Maybe there are some shortwave broadcasts available to those who bought hand cranked radios before it all went to hell. There is one bright spot with human powered radio. At least your arms will have something to do even if you don't.

Probably there's no mail. The postman's motto of "neither rain nor shine nor gloom of night" deterring their rounds doesn't seem to contemplate improvised explosive devises, nor snipers or suspicious homeowners. Newspapers? Maybe. If someone still has a working mimeograph machine, that is. And ink. And paper. Who delivers the publication to strange neighborhoods? Will they come back alive?

News will be forced to travel at the speed of rumors and will be about as accurate. There are few, if any, reporters showing up in your neighborhood anyway. Reporters these days don't seem to care as much for combat zones as they used to back in Walter Cronkite's days. Maybe it's because they end up dead more often.

No telephones. Sure your land line always worked even if the power went out. But, they don't work if the lines are down or the central station demolished and the repairmen shot. Back to tin cans on a string perhaps? Or, smoke signals? Maybe not even that. With all the bombing and fires, smoke signals might be hard to notice among all the other smoke and dust. The only thing you actually can rely on in the way of news is what you see with your own two eyes.

No internet certainly. No video games. I-pods? Maybe. At least until there's a charge left as long as they use alkaline batteries. Since you are stuck at home, a game of catch for the kids then? Okay, but are there land mines in the field? Don't forget how the snipers in the Balkans ethnic purges changed the risk of going outside even on the most innocent of tasks.

It's no longer "Home Sweet Home" anymore, is it when 9/11 becomes 24/7? Come to think of it, do you still have a home anymore? Your cute little ranch or Victorian might end up demolished to clear for a "field of fire" or just be unlucky enough to be in a "free fire" zone? Perhaps your home ends up used for mortar practice. Now that sales ad about a great price for a "fixer upper" is actually accurate.

Of course, it's not always the bad guys with bad intentions who wipe out your homeowner tax deduction. Did the person doing the targeting against something else twitch at the wrong moment? Did he do his math right in calculating the ballistics and fire a "short round?" Nothing is more unfriendly than so-called "friendly fire" incidents. Maybe

your house is mistaken for harboring a suspected terrorist. Maybe the house next door is suspected of harboring a terrorist. The blast radius of bombs is pretty substantial. Either way, do you end up living in a tent in the Winter as a refugee to escape the bombing? Or, maybe the roulette ball ends up on double zero and you're the one crushed under the collapsing rubble while your friends try to clear with their bare hands. Once you thought all you had to fear was being bitten by a mosquito with the West Nile Virus. What a fond memory.

No matter where you live, you need money to live. But, it's downright dangerous to go the office to earn that money. That crate marked Coors laying at the side of the road? Is it empty cardboard or hiding C-4 explosives? The used tire dumped by the stop sign? Just shredded from wear and tear or waiting to shred you? That freshly turned dirt in the pot hole in the pavement? Make you nervous?

There's little fuel to fill the Buick anyway. Besides, the Chevron station needs both gas resupply deliveries and power to pump it.

And, even if you find the wherewithal to drive, you can still get shot by the soldiers in the sandbagged bunkers placed at intersections to "protect" you. Perhaps you don't notice the nervous troopers signaling you to stop or don't do it fast enough. A steel jacketed slug through the windshield works pretty well at accomplishing that. Oops. Maybe they didn't know you're a patriot.

You're not safe even if you make it to downtown Tigard or Baker or Cannon Beach (another nicely ironic name by the way). If you are a judge or a lawyer or a policeman or a fireman, your very occupation could target you for elimination, let alone if you are a politician or, for that matter, even an ordinary supporter of a particular party someone doesn't like.

Being a simple Starbucks or Kinkos business owner doesn't make you immune. Perhaps you help or hurt someone by your mere existence. Insurgency - what a handy way to eliminate competition or someone not liked. Does anyone carry a grudge against you for any reason?

Even if you're not singled out, there's always the possibility of a spreading fire from the deliberate bombing or a misplaced artillery shell nearby which wipes your business out. Accidents happen even in war zones. It probably is a moot point anyway. Do you have any workers left or any inventory or anyone with any money to spend on it if you happen to finish production of something?

Being a lowly laborer instead of a rich boss does not make you immune from danger going to work. Do you have the right skin coloration? The right clothing? Wearing jeans or shorts and walking down Broadway might get you murdered by someone who doesn't think his particular God wants you wearing them.

Even if you are dressed innocuously, do you have the right Bible? The right ID in your pocket? Maybe you better carry more than one version and hope you remember the right pocket when you are asked to produce it. Do you have the right last name? What if being a Johnson or Gonzales automatically marked you for righteous death?

No matter what, you could still end up seized at random, thrown on in a camper, have your hands tied behind your back and get a swift bullet in the head or leisurely tortured first. Worse yet, you could end up on camera for your family to watch in horror as you are slaughtered like a cow at the Oscar Meyer abattoir.

Staying home 24/7 doesn't necessarily protect you. A knock on the door could be a signal you are about to be executed. The fact that those outside the door are wearing Clatsop County Sheriff uniforms is no assurance. Anyone can buy or steal them.

It doesn't have to be a terrorist hit squad. The uniforms might be government issued to employees on the government payroll. It could be the government itself doing the seizing, the torturing, the jailing, the executing, all on mere suspicion or an injudicious comment against the Prez or a jealous neighbor falsely reported slander of the Prez.

You might be able to barricade or arm yourself to defend against individual attackers - for a while at least. But, once the bombs or rockets start falling, you might as well be at a Vegas crap table shooting dice. How's your luck? Won any lotteries lately?

A canister of jellied gasoline, a/k/a napalm, isn't known for pinpoint accuracy. Even the so-called "smart" instruments of destruction they're using these days aren't very smart for the most part, nor are they always the loud large ordinance being dropped. And, even if they were "smart" bombs, the guys steering them might not be smart enough to know where they should be steered. On top of that, a little terror among the populace might be deemed a "good" thing by those in charge of directing the high explosives.

You think things were bad in New Orleans because of Katrina? Imagine if it never ended. Imagine if there was not even a "heck-of-a-job Brownie" at a FEMA. Imagine aid workers, rescuers and firemen fearful to enter . . . ever. Helicopters to rescue you? Targets! Or, possibly still doing the targeting themselves.

In other words, you might not be able to get to the hospital if you are hurt by a bomb or a rocket. You might not make it even if you're merely sick on an ordinary day without actual bombing. Highway 101 or a key bridge is likely to have been bombed long before even assuming the hospital itself wasn't. As recent news reports reveal, there is reason to fear the ambulance marked with the huge red cross on top delivering you may be strafed as many have in Lebanon. Think not? Ask the Israelis about their public warnings they would do exactly that. Ask the second Sunni or Shiite suicide bomber who is waiting until after the first one exploded for the medical help and crowds of mourners to arrive on the scene.

Once you make it to Providence Memorial or whatever is closest, you may find there are no medical supplies or not enough beds because of the large volume of the killing and death. Kidney dialysis or organ transplant or MRI or other fancy stuff? Good luck even getting an aspirin.

Imagine tanks and uniformed troops everywhere. Imagine too lots of “civilians,” or at least men not in uniform but still brandishing automatic weapons. Imagine them being pretty careless about firing off those weapons. And, any bullet that goes up has to come down somewhere. Hope you are not standing in the air space where they do.

Imagine some bad guys over whom you have no control deciding that they wanted to use your neighborhood for a missile launch site. Imagine what happens when they do. The missile trail points back to your neighborhood and guys on the other side with even bigger missiles might hold you responsible.

Imagine curfews. When was the last time you were subject to a curfew? Imagine martial law being imposed. Imagine curfew violations being enforced with steel jacketed slugs.

Imagine those same tanks and troops patrolling your subdivision streets, but now imagine they are not your friends and neighbors. Imagine, just for the sake of our little thought exercise, say, they are a Chinese army occupying Oregon with our own troops disbanded or in hiding. Imagine that those foreign troops can break down your door with impunity and point their rifle barrels at you and your sons while they search your house. Be careful what you do and when you do it since locks no longer mean anything.

Maybe you were glad when they first arrived. Probably not unless you also wanted the current rulers removed from office and brought to trial. But, either way, imagine they have been there for months or years. Still want them around? What would you do in such circumstances?

Why bring up such unpleasant thoughts? It “can’t” happen here after all. Right? After all, we have those super spooks at the CIA and the NSA and their expensive high tech toys to ferret out all the bad guys before they ever get here. Right? After all, we have the ever vigilant and no doubt super competent Homeland Security to find all the bombs hidden in the shoes. After all, we are building a 42 foot wall along, gosh, several hundred miles of our many thousand mile long border and surely the Border Patrol or the Minute Men won’t let any bad guys in. Right? Surely the wily skills of our wise wizards and ambassadors will make friends rather than enemies abroad. Right?

And, it’s not as if we would ever have lunatic fringe groups already here ready to start revolutions or insurgencies for their own purposes. Black Panthers? White Supremists? Squeaky Fromme? Right to Life abortion clinic bombers? Americans would never kill fellow Americans or indulge in ethnic cleansing like those other uncivilized countries,

would they? The Civil War, Southern lynchings, race riots and the near eradication of Native Americans were surely just anomalies, weren't they? And, just because NeoCons have called dissenters "traitors" and wished them dead merely for disagreeing with the Republican Administration does not mean they really would like to kill or jail them if the opportunity presented itself and they thought they could get away with it. Right? . . . Right?

Okay. Granted. Unlikely for the immediate moment at least, . . . but . . . still worth contemplating. While our Far West is not the Middle East, we cannot be sanguine that our good fortune will continue forever. Do we need to be reminded by history every single smug civilization that ever existed, imagined it was incapable of being destroyed? Ask the members of the Third Reich that was supposed to last a thousand years. Ask even the Romans. They too thought their particular Gods or military might would protect them in perpetuity. The verdict of History is that it can happen here. It will happen here if we do not consider all the possibilities and act intelligently.

More importantly and of current day relevance, we should remember the excuses of all those in charge of our country at the time of 9/11 who repeatedly alleged that driving planes into buildings was utterly impossible to foresee and could not have been contemplated. Perhaps if they had periodically indulged in a similar thought process to that set forth above, they might have seen some possibilities and taken steps to prevent them. Is that lack of foresight happening again in our present policies concerning the Middle East

In any event, you cannot know a problem unless you give it some serious thought, part of which must be an attempt to put yourself in the shoes of others. How can you possibly conclude how others will react our policies toward them if you cannot first fully understand what they are going through?

Moreover, we might read in the paper about how we are supposedly "at war," yet we are certainly not acting like it today. And, since we are not experiencing it first hand, doesn't that suggest we can and should afford the time to devote at least some small modicum of imagining what could happen in some detail?

We certainly need to do so before accepting at face value any facile solutions offered by any slack jawed politicians or pundits which can be summed up in a ten second "sound bite." We need to do so early on because we ultimately are all responsible for what our elected leaders and the allies they choose are doing or create, even if the consequences were unintended or unwanted. There are consequences. Evidence suggests 9/11 may have been a consequence of some of our policies. Perhaps we would not have changed the policies, but why weren't we recognizing and discussing what could happen?

Whether 9/11 was a consequence, whether you see yourself as God fearing or Jesus loving or neither, we must go through such thought puzzles because we need to do some

cost/benefit analysis of possible consequences to others, if not ourselves.

After doing this analysis, some might conclude our part in the Middle East is wrong. Others might we need to fight them over there so we won't have to fight them here. That's fair. Disagreement and competing points of view are what democracy is about. The point is that informed decisions should not—cannot—be properly made without careful consideration, especially when dealing with something as alien to our present personal experience as what is going on in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel and Somalia. The future activities of someone forced to live where 9/11 is truly 24/7 cannot be predicted or even intelligently debated unless we try to understand the atmosphere that such daily fear, frustration and derivation breeds.

So, start thinking. Then, express your opinion to those who have power, and put new ones in charge if they do not seem to listen...



EYES
Neen Drage

Where do we go from here...

Our road ends at a spar pole spiked with cables;
We piss on broken trees and play havoc on heavy machinery.
Another road ends at the canyon.
We toss a penny from the edge.
How far down to turn up heads or tails?

Should we follow the ways of the tent makers
that preach in the temples, turning tables
and raising Cain?
And for all their troubles, they're stoned by idiots,
beaten with sticks,
and run out of town.

Should we dance in a circle with streaks
of blue and orange tied to our belts?
The women hold onto the fading
pleasures of twilight
as we feast at the harvest table
on the far side of the pasture.

Should we follow the elders to the meditation room
where a tree grows from a crack in the floor?
Braided hair in albums on the wall preserve
the ancient message:
the world is saved by
beauty.

Should we fatten ourselves on figs and salmon,
huckleberries and saki?
We'll be fit as the butcher's dog
and spend our time in languid conversation.
Forget the road and pass the cup,
tomorrow is another day.

Or should we follow the raucous croak
of the winging raven?
No formality on the air waves, do unto others
as you do to yourself.
The thermals lift our spirits to a height where
all roads become wrinkles in the
dust.



STILL LIFE
Taryn Arnold

Farm Boy is obnoxious, he says how he feels
His truck's always muddy, he loves his big wheels
Raggedy pants and hickory shirt
He can be the worst nightmare, to a girl in a skirt
With a lip full of snuff and a bottle of booze
He will jump in his truck and go for a cruise
This boy's not too smart, but he still has some skill
He's got a good job at a small lumber mill

Dictionary loves school, his hobby is reading
Instead of parties and friends, his goals are succeeding
Small body, big glasses, hair combed to the side
He's okay being shrimpy because his grades give him pride
Valedictorian, in his future he's wealthy
Avoiding parties with drinks, he'll also be healthy
Despite high school snobs, that are all very shady
He has the greatest respect, for every young lady

Miss Priss loves high heels and her beautiful face
Mind over beauty, would be her disgrace
Lipstick, hoop earrings, eye shadow, gloss
Her teeth are so white; you can tell she does floss
When it rains she stays in, not to flatten her curls
She's from head to toe frosted, with diamonds and pearls
Mostly kind to others, but shallow with looks
She's concerned about glamour, far before books

Ball Boy loves sports and girls that are pretty
His appearance is wealthy, he's nothing to pity
Running the track and bouncing the ball
He's big and he's buff, he's tan and he's tall
Dressed in school colors for every home game
He's the best in all sports, he gets all the fame

With a girl in one arm and a ball in the other
This jock got his traits from his jock older brother

Barely in school, usually up in the forest
Pot Head's eyes are so squinty, and his clothes are the poorest
With long shaggy hair, and a pack on his back
Teachers always say, he does nothing but slack
Some say relaxed, others say lazy
Most of the time, his mind is quite hazy
In his own little world, just him and the green
Nothing else matters, to this happy teen

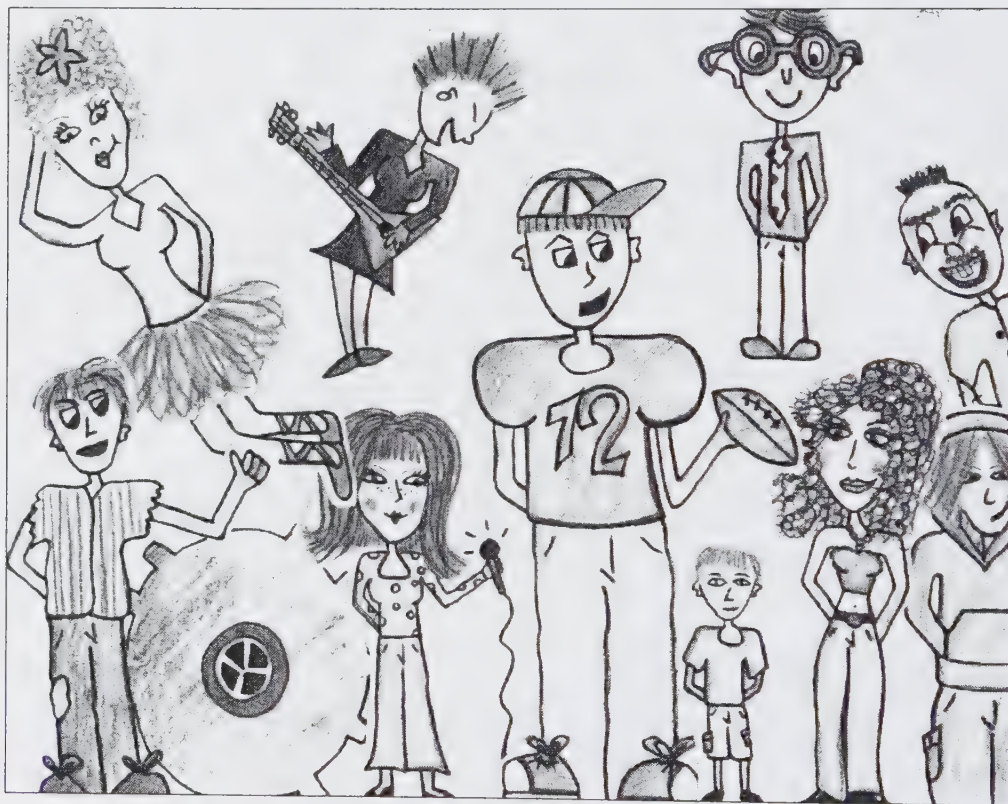
Emo girl's thing is the drum, it's the snare
Along with her piercings, she shows off her blue hair
She hates all the rules, fashion's a bother
This girl rebels, against her very own father
Shy Guy's quiet, never really speaks
He's not one of the preps, or one of the geeks
He's always dressed average never too bright
Never in drama and never does fight

Dressed for school clubs and an A in each class
Go Girl does everything smoother than glass
She's always the one with school recognition
You'll see her involved, in every school competition
Pet's very best friends, are the teachers at school
All he really wants, is to be one that's cool
With buck teeth and braces, an unpleasant smell
He's the one in the classroom, long after the bell

Tutu looks so sweet, she's a very cute girl
She loves her ballet, to spin and to twirl
She's one of those teens, so well behaved
Hair always neat, legs always shaved

Despite the cliques that will clash
There will be a big bash

On the cruise to the tropic
That has been the big topic
Their bags are all packed and they're ready to go
Too bad leaving their friends has to be such a blow
Waiting to take off, also waiting to see
What this strange mixture, will turn out to be.



April Ranta

The bumper sticker on the old farm truck in the driveway read “Stumps don’t lie” as we drove up to the winery in Oregon’s Willamette Valley. It was a fall morning and the grape vines looked tired; the fruit had been picked. These were the waning days of the spotted owl-timber wars. Environmentalists and farmers didn’t get along much better than environmentalists and loggers. But I saw the bumper sticker and I knew we were on friendly ground. It was 1995 and we were seeking a first farm to test the idea of a new ecolabel called Salmon-Safe which would certify land management practices that protect water quality and wildlife habitat.

Fields and farming were familiar to me. I grew up on a small farm in the rolling fields of Eastern Washington’s Palouse Hills. Surrounded by wheat farms, I didn’t hear much about protecting soils, water, or wildlife. On spring mornings, waiting for the school bus, my sisters and I would feel the cool mist of chemical spray as a crop duster made a pass over the adjacent field.

On my parent’s small farm, food was grown in response to the people and farm animals it sustained. As a ten-year-old, I sold potatoes, still covered in dark volcanic soil, from the sliding door of a VW bus. Later in the fall, I’d sell pumpkins, parked on a downtown street in Moscow, Idaho. Following the seasons, I began selling vegetables in a farmers’ market: rhubarb in the spring, beans in the summer, tomatoes in the fall. This was the 1970s and I’d sell anything that I could glean from the gardens or orchard.

Once I left the farm, it would be more than a decade before I would think again about agriculture and how food is grown or the possibility that the fate of nature might be intertwined with how we farm. My parents had planted hillsides of Ponderosa pine, elderberry, and dogwood with the same passion that they tended their orchard and livestock. It wasn’t until returning home that I saw the habitat they had created for owls, coyotes, and other wildlife through their own relationship to the land.

LAY OF THE LAND

The challenge in starting up the Salmon-Safe certification program wasn’t convincing people that it was a good idea. Just about everyone that I talked to along with my colleague, a former USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service agronomist, liked the idea of finding marketplace incentives to reward farmers that protected salmon habitat. The problem was that Salmon-Safe was an idea hatched by an environmental policy think tank called Pacific Rivers Council: a Eugene, Oregon-based organization with a reputa-

tion for advocacy and litigation. When we'd talk to farmers they would inevitably express the same hesitation that we often heard from the lawyers and policy experts back in the Pacific Rivers Council office. Somehow we needed to forge a relationship between these urban and rural perspectives: an understanding of the role of farmland in protecting the lowland habitat and its importance to the survival of wild Pacific salmon.

By the 1990s, the plight of wild salmon had become the most strident indicator of declining health in Northwest watersheds. Wild salmon populations had decreased by more than 90 percent in the Columbia River system and native fish had disappeared from 40 percent of their historic Northwest range. Even as a native of the region, I was in my thirties before I witnessed the miracle of wild salmon spawning in the shadow of Oregon's Cascade Range.

That morning in the vineyard marked the real beginning of Salmon-Safe. In the following months, my colleague and I traveled the back roads of the Willamette Valley and elsewhere on the West Coast where we found progressive landowners willing to consider certification under an ecolabel that was still very much in development. We ranged as far south as California's Feather River and as far north as Washington's Methow Valley. Mostly we traveled the back roads of the southern Willamette Valley, up against the low gray foothills of Oregon's Coast Range.

Many times, we'd sit with a farmer at the kitchen table, talking about our vision for the ecolabel, listening to a description of the difficulties of sustaining a farm in a commodity agricultural system that left farmers powerless in the marketplace. Other times we'd meet with marketing managers or field managers of large organic operations. For these growers, pioneers in the organic movement like Lundberg Family Farms, near Sacramento, or Organic Valley Dairy Cooperative, with several family-run dairies in a lush valley below Washington's Mt. Adams, Salmon-Safe would seem like a natural extension of both their farming and marketing programs. We found that our lineage with the Pacific Rivers Council helped establish credibility with the organic community. Organic farmers became the core audience as we began recruiting growers for certification.

CONNECTING WITH CONSUMERS

Unlike ecolabels started by industry groups and foundations, Salmon-Safe has always had a goal of informing the public about the role of farming in the decline of the Northwest's salmon watersheds. From the very start, we communicated this message positively in the now-familiar "vote with your dollars" manner, by promoting products sourced from ecologically sustainable farms. Early in the project, we conducted informal focus groups about the Salmon-Safe logo. We'd place the label on a bottle of Oregon pinot gris and ask consumers what they thought. A more than typical response was that "it must mean that

this wine goes well with salmon.”

I had no illusions that building a Salmon-Safe brand and generating consumer response to certified products would be swimming downstream. Now, after years of promoting the logo in supermarkets, I’m gratified when I meet a stranger who says, “Oh yeah, Salmon-Safe. I’ve seen that logo on a bottle of wine. It means that the vineyard practices reduce runoff into rivers.”

This is due in large part to the longtime dedication of Livengood/Nowack, a Portland-based ad agency that’s worked pro bono on the project from its inception. In the summer of 1995, when Salmon-Safe was still searching for willing farmers and developing the means and measures to certify them, I cold-called Livengood/Nowack. Their office was up a long flight of stairs. Glancing at an office wall covered with urban graffiti-as-art, I wondered if these were dirt-kicking folks that could talk with farmers. Almost a dozen years later, that same creative team is still developing retail campaigns, print ads, and Salmon-Safe’s other marketing and design projects.

Ecolabels hadn’t yet emerged on the landscape at the time we started Salmon-Safe. The only biodiversity-driven ecolabel in the marketplace then was Dolphin Safe, established by Earth Island Institute. I traveled to Marin County, just north of San Francisco to talk to the founders of Dolphin Safe. They warned of funding challenges and the difficulties of reaching consumers in an indifferent retail marketplace. I left their office thinking that perhaps the farmlands of the Pacific Northwest were more fertile ground for market-based conservation than the high seas.

With a dozen farm operations prepared to seek certification and our foundation backers calling us to task to get the program into the marketplace, finishing the certification guidelines became our critical task. With support from Pacific Rivers Council’s staff salmon biologist and my agronomist colleague on the project, we contracted with an international expert in forestry certification, Robert Hrubes, PhD, to translate the volumes of information we’d gathered about management practices and the ecological needs of salmon into a meaningful certification framework. More than 120 farms later, those same standards are still in use today.

INTO THE MARKETPLACE

Salmon-Safe officially launched in March 1997 with a media event at a winery near Portland and the start of a retail campaign in 40 natural food stores, mostly in western Oregon. We had only certified about a dozen products that ranged from packaged rice to organic milk to wine and fresh juice. Amid the contentious stories coming from the Northwest that year of spotted owls and endangered salmon, Salmon-Safe gained attention as a feel-good story. *Newsweek*, *US Today*, and other national media covered the press

launch. Outside magazine satirized the program with an illustrated container of Salmon-Safe “cookies and stream” ice cream, wondering if “spotted-owl-safe sushi could be far behind.” As they say, there’s no such thing as bad press.

Even as the label started appearing in Pacific Northwest natural food stores, we began working to gain the confidence of Fred Meyer, then one of the nation’s largest independent grocery retailers, to achieve a much larger promotion. A store merchandiser in southern Oregon called to say that people were walking off with our fish-shaped “leaping salmon” shelf talker. “That’s a good thing,” she then qualified. After six months, and a series of meetings, the company announced that it would promote Salmon-Safe in more than one hundred supermarkets throughout the western United States.

The Fred Meyer launch was the high-water mark of our early years. Oregon’s Governor John Kitzhaber, river conservation enthusiast and former Pacific Rivers Council board member, spoke at a media event at a Portland store to kick off the year-long promotion. “Salmon-Safe is the best example yet of the voluntary cooperative approach that is needed to prevent the extinction of wild salmon,” said the governor, clad in his trademark Levis and cowboy boots against a backdrop of Salmon-Safe posters and wine bottles.

Meanwhile, I was still following the trail of ecologically sustainable farming as far afield as Idaho’s Clearwater River Basin and Washington’s Skagit Valley. I’d drive home weary with the realization that change can’t happen this slowly across so vast a landscape and still make a difference. We also couldn’t charge enough for certification to operate the program without significant foundation subsidies.

I also soon learned that Salmon-Safe’s experience was the rule, not the exception. The economics of certification in other regions of the country wasn’t penciling out either. Even for non-profits, farm certification was a break-even business, at best. If the audience for farm certification had limited potential to fund the important ecological benefits delivered by certification, perhaps we simply needed to find a new audience beyond agriculture. That opportunity emerged in the form of an inquiry from the city of Portland. In 1999 Chinook salmon in Oregon’s Willamette River had been listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The city of Portland, grappling with the first urban ESA listing in U.S. history, was seeking innovative means to inspire urban citizens, as well as city employees, to reduce water quality impacts in the Willamette River. Their inquiry inspired the development of peer-reviewed certification programs for municipalities and, most recently, corporate and university campuses.

But as Salmon-Safe began to shift toward an exciting expansion into urban watersheds, the project had entirely run out of funding. Foundation supporters of market-based conservation were put off by our unconventional affiliation with a public lands advocacy organization, while traditional environmental funders were not inclined to back

a conservation initiative on private land. Our connection with Pacific Rivers Council had also become a barrier to working with municipalities and industry associations; the time had come to separate.

THE NEED TO ADAPT

With \$50,000 in seed funding from Pacific Rivers Council and a single employee, Salmon-Safe spun off as an independent organization. At a meeting in Portland's wood-paneled Arlington Club, our founding board charted a new course. We would operate in key salmon watersheds through a network of partnerships with locally based conservation organizations, and we would seek to quantify the impact of the adoption of Salmon-Safe practices in those watersheds.

In southern Oregon, we partnered with Applegate River Watershed Council and World Wildlife Fund to develop a Salmon-Safe Applegate label for family-scale growers of vegetables, livestock, goat cheese, and other agricultural products sourced from this ecologically important tributary to the Rogue River. This template of a locally managed, watershed-based project was next applied in the Snoqualmie Valley, just east of Seattle, in partnership with a Washington-based conservation organization called Stewardship Partners. The Rogue Valley and the Puget Sound region now boast more than 45 Salmon-Safe certified growers, mostly organic farms supplying their local markets.

In urban centers, Salmon-Safe certifies some of the region's largest corporate and college campuses, including Nike, Toyota, Kettle Foods, and Portland State University. Whether the site is a corporate campus like Nike's with streams and wetlands, an urban office park, or a university campus, certification requires management practices to reduce stormwater runoff and nonpoint source pollution. "Thanks to Nike, they'll run a clean race," says the headline on buses carrying Salmon-Safe public service advertising through downtown Portland in the summer of 2006. The bus side shows salmon swimming with racing bibs.

Still, wine remains Salmon-Safe's flagship product. Working with Oregon Tilth and the Oregon wine industry's sustainability initiative, Salmon-Safe has certified 75 vineyards representing a third of Oregon's total vineyard acreage. Early participants, like Brick House, Sokol Blosser, and Bethel Heights, have now been certified for 10 years. Natural food retailers report that sales typically increase 15 to 20 percent during our month-long promotional campaigns.

HOW MANY SALMON HAVE WE SAVED?

Quantifying the ecological benefits of practices in the watersheds where Salmon-Safe operates remains a more elusive goal. When reporters call, one of the questions they like

to ask is, "How many salmon have you saved?" The facts are grim. Wild salmon populations continue their precipitous decline. Fewer than 5,000 wild Chinook now make the journey up the Snake River drainage of the Palouse Hills farm where I grew up. The Willamette River in Portland, where Salmon-Safe and so many other organizations and individuals have labored for years, still isn't swimmable or fishable, much less drinkable. But in response to the need for quantifiable results, our Applegate program is testing an on-farm ecological monitoring program at five farms in southern Oregon using methods such as vegetation inventories and temperature monitoring. Walking these farms over the years, I've seen land transformed. Streamside restoration, re-establishment of native vegetation and hedgerows, more efficient irrigation management, livestock fencing, and erosion control measures all establish a more productive farming system where wild nature can thrive.

As I survey the terrain of the Pacific Northwest and Northern California, what we now call "salmon nation," I'm hopeful for the future of farming. I also fear our efforts may be too little, too late for wild salmon. Still, it's important for us to do everything we can to save the salmon, even if, in the back of our minds, we know it's really about more than the salmon. It's about finding meaningful ways to reconnect ourselves to the land, to our watersheds, and to each other. Saving the salmon and saving ourselves will demand nothing less.



SALMON SAFE LABELS
Dan Kent

AFTER SEVERAL FALSE TRIES, FINDING THE HOUSE...

Anne Splane Phillips

and the entrance
well, she was so simple it was ostentatious,
ratty stressed tee shirt, cargo pants,
but all right things in place – music, books, Asian artifacts,
cat and bird –

yard untended, like uncombed hair flowing
wild as bushel baskets covering everything
in mounds of flowering herbs,
stuff that brings butterflies – aromatic and
wandering –

furniture, inside, achieving the patina
of accumulated dust –
nothing cleaned up or straightened for company
when we went over –
surprised to find

she really was
the deep vein of person who is authentic
in an almost non-human way – thinned
to the bareness of no in and out – sharpened
like a bite heard by an ear, that is calling –
outside
and up high – things keep tugging –

but on the sun porch, beyond the dining room, I could only
see the estuary – with no clear path to the water.

I wonder about those who lived here.
Bartender, butcher and merchant marine,
all walked these floors.

Wives, rotund and corpulent
from childbearing.
Others aged and slim,
touched these walls
and bathed in the old claw foot tub.

The threshold on the backdoor
is worn from years of feet,
long gone.

I'm curious about the motive
that instigated the planting of the Araucaria,
which now stands majestically suspended
one hundred feet above our house.
Monkeys may not be able to climb it,
the Monkey Puzzle tree,
but raccoons certainly can
while carrying a young one.

Did one of the earliest residents,
a sea captain, perhaps, travel
and bring it home from Chile
one hundred years ago?
Did he send for it in the mail?
When he dug the hole did he realize
that it would endure long past his own life?

Apparently one past owner,
an old, worn sea dog
was flagrantly eccentric.
He lived here alone for many years.

He painted everything aqua blue,
perhaps from a 5 gallon bucket of marine paint
he confiscated from his last ship.

He obviously didn't need money
or struggled with mental illness
because he tucked it all away,
inside the house.

Payroll checks placed into drawers
instead of the bank,
accumulated for years.

After his death
a cousin he never knew
became a millionaire overnight.

I try to imagine how she must have felt
when strangers came to her door
to tell her of her good fortune.
They said she stood in the doorway in a robe
wearing bunny slippers, pink curlers in her hair.
Shocked? Stunned?
Incredulity
must have been written
across her freshly scrubbed face.

Now we leave our mark
upon this lovely old place.
Amidst tears and joy,
we paint, we repair
we replace broken parts
as our way of saying,
thank you for waiting for us.

Through the doors that hold me back,
Across the lake of metal,
Bridge across the river of black,
My heart it doth not settle,

Follow along the concrete stream,
Treading on a muddy path,
Pass the red sign that doth gleam,
Beware the yellow beast's wrath,

Balls of metal screaming loud,
Walking the river of gray,
Beyond the stars beyond the crowd,
Past the waters red with clay,

Follow along the snake in the sky,
Streams of metal follow your side,
Smoking monsters bellow and cry,
Grouping together on this ride,

Through the bends and the curves,
Past the screaming troll,
Now it's time to settle your nerves
Into the darkness, to rest your soul.

WAR is a word for a word which is a word for this word which goes back to the word that went to the word that I don't know the meaning to and then it goes through several more words and jeez I don't know where this is going so why don't you stop me before I get too far ahead of you because this word goes through so many other words you wouldn't believe me even if I told you which I am doing right now so why am I telling you all this crap is because all this leads up to one thing and its one of the most dreadful words that reminds me of another word but I won't go there right now because I am trying to get my point across and I don't really know how so I am going to tell you what this word really leads up to but I forgot what word I was talking about oh yeah its that one word that leads up to the other word that I don't know but I am getting ahead of myself I don't even understand what it is I am saying so I'll get right to the point I think it leads up to the word WAR and that's it.



ABSTRACT
Bradley Knox

Stolen maps littered the floor. The Belinda Carlisle tape, the only cassette in the car, played on repeat for the hundredth time.

We had met only a couple weeks earlier. Now we were tracing the canyons and mountains of the starlit southwest in her tiny Honda Civic Del Sol.

Las Vegas to Reno...

Via the Grand Canyon.

We saw the sun rise over the immensity of the Grand Canyon. Ate tempeh sandwiches in a cafe next to windows looking out on the snow-covered streets of Flagstaff. Our route took us through the unearthly rock stacks of Utah.

Zion, Utah. Rocks like vertical altars to the heavens. We could not see them as we drove in, for even the dark of night was obscured by the snowstorm. Awake since dawn, her car taking the icy roads the way a rowboat masters a stormy sea. It was left to hope and chance. But then, even the slightest chance presents new windows.

She liked windows. As we later walked the streets of the town she had lived in, a town that seethes desperation, existing on its dying breaths, she told me of her favorite window. 'Up there,' she pointed, 'I would sit for hours and write.'

So as chance would have it, we found ourselves at another window. The Mountain Lodge. We were looking for a corner where we could spend the night undisturbed. Snow covered the ground outside, I would do anything not to sleep in that tiny car again.

A window.

Try it.

Locked.

Is anyone inside?

Is anyone outside?

Hold on, one more try.

Open.

A pause. She was nervous about this. So was I. I looked at her.

I don't think that we can *not* do this.

Take my hand.

Watch your head.

Are you alright?

Like all of the luxury of the city that we had fled. Like the castle spires, the neon facades. Like the grandeur of the fountains, the sparkle of the showgirls, that is what we saw

in the tiny cabin. A bed and a fireplace and a window to the rocks, our paradise needed nothing more.

Morning. The sky was lit, but the sun hadn't come up. It wouldn't for a while. We were in a crack in the canyon. For the first time, the rocks came into view. Towers. Unclimbable. Unimaginable. Red rocks, blue snow. Like crystal.

Night. Tired eyes. Gentle hands. Whispered voices.

'I can't believe this.'

Neither could I.

Laughter. At the situation. At the window with the now crooked screen. At the warm bed on a cold night. At chance.

She said she woke up and saw me gazing out the window in amazement.

It was amazing. Waking up next to that window. Waking up next to her.

We moved with the lights off, afraid of bringing any attention to ourselves. Moving through the darkness of the Utah night, silent steps, hushed voices, unconceivable smiles. Like thieves.

Morning would bring another need to disappear, this time from the mountain itself. The night's snow clung to the lanterns that lined the walkway. White crystal, orange electricity. Both sparkled. We walked out the front door, took a breath of morning air, and stepped into the snow. Leaving an unmade bed and taking with us the impossibility of those rocks, those colors. We had Reno to get to.

But that would be morning.

This was tonight.

Gentle touches. Long caresses.

'The other night...' she said. Referring to her birthday. We dressed up new wave style. Picture it. Pizza dinner. Ratty hair, atrocious clothes. Sunglasses at night. We left the bar together. Slurred words, Sloppy kisses.

'So...'

She turned toward me. Black hair lit softly by the porchlight that seeped in through the window. The outline of her face. Her eyes that shimmered even when all else was black.

Now those eyes met mine. Her warmth beside me. Her voice a whisper that could spark fires on this Antarctic night.

'I'm waiting...'

We scramble out into the backyard, screen door slapping shut behind us. A sunny morning. Pete is carrying the ball. No softball or baseball, the field is too short. So we play our own little game we call ragball.

In ragball a bunch of rags are wound tight together, then wrapped with twine and tape. The ball doesn't carry far when hit, but that's the point. And since there's only five or six of use, we further simplify the game by having just two bases: home plate and first.

Now Albert, Alice's twin, calls, "I'm pitcher!" And he goes to the mound and lobs one in to me underhand at catcher. I always liked playing catcher, even as kid. Talk it up, get in close and worry the batter.

The players are in position now. We don't use mitts, no need for them. I call out, "Play ball!" and we start.

Alice and Peter are outfielders on the other team; little Jimmy and myself make up our side. There are no infielders, not enough players. The object is to hit the ball, and before the ball can be retrieved and thrown in to the catcher, to reach the base, turn and hurry back to home plate, scoring ahead of the ball.

I'm first at bat. If you don't this thing solid it just spins off to the side like a whirlybird. In comes the pitch, a low one. I scoop the ball and it goes right straight over Pete's head in center field. I dash for first, turn, and gasping spring home! A run scores. We're ahead by one. Now Jimmy is up to bat. He strikes out. The neighbor boy show up and plays on our side. Hits a run in; somebody else brings one in. We're up by two. The inning ends after a couple strikeouts.

New team up to bat. Real quick they get four runs. Now they're ahead by two. At that point, Janet, my wife shows up late from a doctor's appointment and joins in the competition. Now the game is complete, like a perfect circle. In fact, you wonder sometimes if there ever was anything more perfect than this. Playing on a summer day, and, after a while, hardly counting the score. You think to yourself it seem we're all tied together by these tiny invisible threads, one family indissoluble, a living cell, happy. Nothing could go wrong now.

Oh, sometimes a momentary squabble breaks out. But it usually doesn't amount to much. "I got robbed!" somebody screams. "That was no strike!" another cries. And the game picks up and goes on, until finally, someone gets up to bat in whatever far distant inning, and he gets a hold of a good solid one, right in the middle of the ball, and it explodes in a scattering of rags. Game over. Everybody tired, laughing, ready for lunch.

Oh, that was fun, Dad. That was really fun.

Boxing was still legal in the high schools in the 1940s. The matches were called "Smokers". Just why is anyone's guess. Maybe because smoking had once been allowed in the arena; maybe because the term was intended to be emotionally descriptive, as in, "the smoke from their gloves!" Certainly that would have been the way young Arny Pedersen might have interpreted the term. For Arny would get so charged up on the way to the match on a winter Friday night, he'd be shadow boxing with himself, or even some bush or tree along the way. Arny loved boxing better than football or basketball, in which you had to submit to a lot of screaming coaches. And though he wasn't real great with the gloves himself, boxing was his favorite sport by far.

On those nights, he and his friends would leap up the stairs to the second floor of the old sweat-smelling Grant High School gymnasium and suddenly, as they stood gazing down at the circles of crammed seats, in the shaded lamps, there would be the ring, the canvas clean and white, the referee strolling nervously about, the contestants still in their locker rooms. And then, above the rustle of the crowd would suddenly come an explosion of cheering and clapping as the fighter entered the arena, in white robes, mouth pieces bulging—his heroes, the all state football player, Irish Pat Duff or big Emory Barnes, the black man from Jefferson.

They'd climb into the ring and start to dance around in their separate corners, eyeing one another, while coaches and managers gathered about them. Finally, the stools would be handed down, the microphone would drop, fighters and referee strolling toward the center of the ring, where a momentary discussion took place. The fighters would be introduced. And then the bell would ring. And, for Arny, it was the gathering of the heroes; it could have been the battlefield of Troy or the plains of medieval Spain.

The thing he liked most about those fights was that they actually fought—unlike with some professional fights, there was no clinching to conserve energy (it wasn't allowed; besides, there wasn't time). They slammed at close quarters and danced, hunched and battered, skipped and swung from the bell on for three solid rounds; and at the final, gong the fighters would be separated by the referee and they would stand there, sweating profusely and perhaps bleeding. And one would smile, and the other nod; and they'd touch gloves and retire to their separate corners to await the decision.

The fights were usually close, and if one fighter won this time, he might lose the next time they met. The fight was essentially a serious workout between athletes, a sort of recognition of camaraderie among equals, not because at home, at the supper table, some-

body didn't refer to niggers or kikes or micks, but because, in the ring you knew all of that must be laid aside, for you either had it or you didn't. And if you didn't have it this time, friend, you'd better go get it before the next time.

As for Arny, he always left the gym afterwards feeling cleansed somehow. Mostly that was because fighting ring-style wasn't anything like a street brawl or mugging; it was something straight-forward and technical, and it took everything you had in you, so that you were not better or worse after; you were just you, but more sufficiently.



AT THE MOVIES
Lesli Larson

CONTRIBUTORS NOTES

CHRIS AHLVERS is from Myrtle Creek, OR. He writes poetry and fiction. He also enjoys drawing and listening to music in his spare time.

KATHERINA AUDLEY is a writer from Portland, OR. When she is not writing, her life is filled with a fishing fever which has led her as far as the Amazon. Her piece in this edition is a recording of her experience as a greenhorn in Bristol Bay, AK.

NANCY BERRY is retired and living in Seaside. She writes a gardening column for the Seaside Historical Society's newsletter and has been published in *Prose and Poetry Annual* and *RAIN Magazine*.

JAN BONO is a personal life coach, writer and speaker. She has been published in *Guideposts*, *Star*, *Short Stuff* and others. For over ten years she wrote a humorous personal experience newspaper column for *The Chinook Observer*. A collection of these columns has been published in her book, *Through My Looking Glass*.

MOE BOWSTERN has been known to fish shad on New York's Hudson River, shrimp in the Gulf of Mexico, and salmon in Kodiak, AK for the past twenty years. She's also been known to change the color of her hair at a moment's notice. When she's not fishing, Bowstern lives and works in Portland, OR where she publishes her zine, *Xtra Tuf*, distributed free to commercial fisher women.

ROBERT J. BRAKE is a college teacher, freelance writer and marketing/communication consultant. His published works include over 100 academic pieces. Brake is also a jazz musician and proud owner of a terminally cute, bullet-speed wire fox terrier named Skippy.

JON BRODERICK has been a commercial fisherman for thirty years and has worked a setnet site out of Bristol Bay, AK for twenty of those years. He is the founder of the Fisher Poets' Gathering. Jon currently teaches English and French at Seaside High School.

JULIE BROWN lives in Astoria, OR. She previously worked with the Fisher Poets Gathering for the first five years. Currently, she is writing a book on Autism and Literature.

ROBERT BROWN runs a small brokerage/financial planning company in Astoria, OR. His photos are on display at Astoria's RiverSea Gallery, Sixth Street Gallery and online at www.robertbrown-photography.com.

TRICIA GATES BROWN lives in Nehalem with her daughter Madison and is curator of the Cannon Beach History Center. She has published a children's book entitled, *Frederick and the Flute Maker*.

RACHAEL BURBANK grew up in Cape Cod, MA and now attends Pacific University in Forest Grove, OR. She discovered her love of creative writing as a junior in High School and intends on pursuing it further.

VIC CAMPBELL grew up in Corvallis, OR and was first published as a child in the *Corvallis Gazette-Times*. Since then he has acquired a lifelong thirst for literary recognition.

DAVID CAMPICHE has grown up on the Long Beach Peninsula and writes about his beloved homeland in his poetry and short stories, which reflect his deep respect for the environment. He is currently working on a book about the Haisla Indian culture in Northwest British Columbia.

JOHN CIMINELLO lives in Naselle, WA and enjoys hiking, gardening and music, especially playing the piano. He has been published in *Sun Magazine* and this is his first time in *RAIN Magazine*.

NANCY COOK worked the Bering Sea for six winters before retiring to earn her MFA in Nonfiction at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. She teaches writing at Clatsop Community College and directs the Wrangell Mountain Writing Workshop each summer in McCarthy, AK.

DAVE DENSMORE has been fishing for over fifty years. He caught the bug while growing up in Kodiak and Alaska's Aleutian Islands. Trolling, crabbing, seining, trawling; he's fished 'em every which way. Densmore has been writing what he calls "love letters or poems to the industry" for nearly twenty-five years. In the offseason, he and his wife, Pat, raise horses and turkeys on their farm in Svensen, OR.

JEAN DOMINEY, while retired from a career in education, continues with her interests in music, literature, languages, and civic affairs. Currently studying Spanish at CCC, she also volunteers for the community food bank, serves as a precinct committee person, and is the local area coordinator for the Oregon division of U.S. Mensa.

PATRICK DIXON is a Photography Instructor at South Puget Sound Community College in Olympia, WA, with 25 years teaching experience in darkroom, traditional and digitally-manipulated photography. Patrick's images and writings have appeared in *The Alaska Fisherman's Journal*, *Pacific Fishing magazine*, *National Fisherman magazine* and *Alaska Geographic*.

LAYTON ELLIOTT currently lives in Beaverton, OR and is part of the third generation of Columbia River fishermen. He has published a book entitled: *The Collected Poems of Layton Elliott* and is currently working on his second.

EDWARD M. FERGUSON comes from a family of early Astorian boat builders. He passed away in 1990. The poem *Blind Pedestrians* was found at a friend's home in Portland, OR and was submitted with permission by Margaret Ferguson Lentners.

ERIN FRISTAD has worked on commercial fishing vessels for 15 years, chasing salmon, herring and crab. She earned her MFA from Goddard College. Her work has appeared in journals such as: *The Blue Collar Review*, *Stringtown*, and *Hanging Loose* among others.

LORRIE HAIGHT is an adventurer at heart. She was born in the Midwest and grew up in Fresno, so going to Alaska to fish for salmon in 1974 opened doors to adventures she couldn't even have imagined. In 2002, she finally wrote down her story and self published *First Time North: A Young Woman's True Alaskan Adventure*, handmaking every copy.

ANN HALVERSON is a homemaker who started writing as part of her grieving process for her daughter Kelly. Her poems have been published at poetry.com. She lives in Westport, OR.

CLAUDIA HARPER resides in Astoria and is a poet and photographer. Her poetry has been published in *RAIN Magazine*, *Hipfish*, and *Astoria Review*. Her most recent book published is a children's book entitled, *The Birthday Party*.

BRIAN HARRISON is a retired Anthropology teacher from Clatsop Community College but continues to work as an archaeologist and fencing instructor as well as writing. He has been previously published in *RAIN Magazine*, *Testle Creek Review*, *Northern Journeys* and *The Salal Review*.

SAM HIGGINS grew up in Hammond, OR, and served in the United States Airforce. A pink-haired fan of rubber duckies, he has been interested in photography since he was fifteen. This is the first time his work has been published.

CHARLES HILLESTAD is a real estate law specialist. He is an unabashed human rights liberal and a strong believer in conservationism. He served as an infantry SSG with the 101st Airborne in the Vietnam conflict.

BRANDY HUSSA is a freelance writer/editor in Clatsop County. She received her BA in English and Theater from Hamilton College and her MA in Teaching, Elementary Ed. from Lewis and Clark. She is member of *Write On!*, a Portland based writing group.

LAREE JOHNSON grew up in Alaska and lives in Astoria. Her current project, in collaboration with Andrew E. Cier, is a lush photographic collection of sepia images of antique clothing from her personal collection.

DAN KENT directs Salmon-Safe, a Portland-based nonprofit environmental organization focused on protection of water quality and salmon habitat, and serves on the board of the Wild Farm Alliance. Raised on a small farm in the Palouse Hills of eastern Washington state, Dan is a fan of Dylan and homegrown greens. He lives with his wife, Tami, and boys, Gabe and Nick, in the Belmont neighborhood of Portland.

BRADLEY KNOX is a graphic designer, father, and committed member of the counter-cultural movement at Clatsop Community College. A member of the VonDicks Car Club, he lives in Astoria, OR.

LESLI "SUNSHINE" LARSON attended Hanford High School in Richland, WA, and later earned her PhD in film and BFA in photography from the University of Oregon. A long term cycle-commuter and enthusiast of carefully titrated caffeine, she currently serves as the Supervisor of Images Services at the University Libraries in Eugene.

WESLEY GENO LEECH started fishing for crabs, shrimp, and albacore off the coast of Washington in 1979, but most of his ocean experience comes from working on merchant and salvage ships pulling other boats and barges out of wrecks off the beach. On land, Leech lives in Chinook, WA and can frequently be found at his wife Joanne's restaurant, *The Sanctuary*, where he practices his poems in the kitchen with a mop.

IRENE MARTIN was born in England and grew-up in Canada. She married a commercial fisherman from Skamokawa, WA. For over thirty years, she has spent her time fishing and writing. Her forthcoming book is entitled, *The Flight of the Bumble Bee*.

MARYANN MASON writes history spots for the public radio program *As It Was* on KSOR. She also interviews mystery writers for the local access television program *Ashland Mystery*, RVTV Noir.

JANE MEANS is a former Language Arts, Creative Writing and Public Speaking teacher. She is also a painter and sculptor whose imaginative and whimsical pieces have been displayed both locally and nationally.

BUCK MELOY is a salmon fisher out of Cordova, AK on the Copper River Flats and in Prince William Sound. He spends his winters in Bellingham, WA, where he does editorial work or photography to help support his fishing habit. He has been a regular participant in the Fisher Poets Gathering since its inception.

FRANK MILLER is a retired college teacher and former fireman. He's been a soldier, a laborer, a truck driver and now he writes poems and fiction from his home in Ocean Park, WA.

DAVID LEE MYERS has been photographing Oregon and Washington landscapes and natural history for over thirty-five years. His work today centers on coastal forests, butterflies around the country and the Columbia River.

DON NISBETT is a professional painter and amateur pirate who has been selling his watercolors and acrylics since he was eight years old. A graduate of Clackamas High School in Portland, Don owns the Crew House Gallery on the Port of Ilwaco. Go visit! He's a fun guy!

REBA OWEN is a retired social worker and a published poet. She enjoys surfing (boogie boarding), gardening, birding, traveling between L.A. and Astoria, OR. She is a graduate of Oregon State University.

JOHN PALMES lives in Juneau, AK and works as a biologist, TV camera operator, musician and commercial fisherman. As an accomplished songwriter and performer, John has appeared at folk festivals in the Pacific Northwest, Europe and Australia.

SUSAN FIRGHILL PARK works part-time at the Seaside Public Library and is completing her low-residency MFA through the Rainier Writing Workshops. Her recent work has appeared online at *kaleidowhirl* and *Branches Quarterly* and has recently published a chapbook, *Estuary Light*.

ANNE SPLANE PHILLIPS has published three chapbooks and the book *Haiku and Salads*. Her work has been shown in *RAIN Magazine*, *Stringtown*, *Hipfish*, and anthologies. She is a retired Family Therapist and is interested in gardening and sustainable living.

ROBERT MICHAEL PYLE has recently been touring independent bookstores for his latest book, *Sky Time in Gray's River: Living for Keeps in a Forgotten Place*. His column "The Tangled Bank" appears in each issue of *ORION* magazine.

DONNA QUINN continues to live, write, observe and wonder in Astoria while tending to her four year old sagebrush plant which is thriving on her front porch in a pot out of the Northwest rain.

APRIL RANTA will graduate from Astoria High School in June 2007, and plans to attend Clatsop Community College. She works for her grandfather, Dr. Goza aka the Dog Whisperer, at Columbia Veterinary Clinic.

JOANNA REICHHOLD has fished out of and lived in Cordova, AK for 7 years. She is working on her first book of poetry and a recording of her songs.

VINCENT REYNOLDS attended writing courses at Eastern Oregon University and has been published in *Pinnacle*, *Oregon East*, *Timberline*, and *RondeDance I*. From 1995 to 1997 he published the monthly literary journal, *Sola*.

JAMES RICKETTS has lived in Jewell for 30 years, raising five children and delivering the same mail route. Much of his inspiration is derived from these two pursuits. He has been published in *RAIN Magazine* previously.

LAURENCE ETHAN ROBERSON lives in Cannon Beach with his wife, Pam and is a retired chemist who enjoys composing poetry and stories that are critical of many generally accepted concepts of physics, philosophy and religion.

SCOTT RUETER has recently moved to Astoria from Los Angeles. He has a B.A. in Creative Writing from Antioch University.

FRANK SEAMAN lives in Astoria and is a Fisher Poet. For 20 years he captained commercial fishing boats. His forthcoming book is entitled, *Ship, Captain, Crew*.

KATY SHANNON has lived in the Pacific Northwest since moving from Los Angeles, CA with her family at age three. She works to refine her skills as a potter, poet and visual artist.

JEREMY E. SHIOK is a full-time writer and sometime commercial fisherman in Uganik Bay in Kodiak, AK. His first volume of poems titled *Mudseason & Other Poems* was published in 2004.

HARRISON SMITTY SMITH has read his poetry at the Fisher Poets Gathering since it started. As soon as he learned to read and write, he began composing poetry and started fishing at about the same time. In the mid 50s he took charter parties out of Ilwaco to fish for salmon and, by 1967, was commercial fishing his own troller.

MARGARET D. SMITH is a freelance writer living in Astoria, OR. Her most recent book is a collection of poems titled, *Barn Swallow*.

JAY SPEAKMAN lives in Gearhart, OR and passes his time gardening, surfing and traveling. His is a commercial fisherman and has been published in *Hipfish* and *Fish for the Freezer* by the Cannon Beach Arts Association.

DENNIS SPERL is a lifelong Alaskan and taught school for many years. He has commercial fished for over 40 years and is still active in salmon, halibut and shrimp fisheries. He is an author and poet and has traveled to Astoria, OR each year for the Fishers Poet Gathering.

SCOTT STARBUCK currently lives near the Clackamas River and facilitates a creative, nonfiction workshop for Write Around Portland. In January 2004, he was a writer-in-residence at the Sitka Center for Art and Ecology near Lincoln City, OR.

BARBARA STOFFER lives in Bay Center, WA and enjoys gardening, music and various other forms of artistic expression. This is her first time being published in *RAIN Magazine*.

VICTORIA PITKANEN STOPPIELLO lives in Ilwaco, WA. She attended the University of California, Berkeley and the University of Colorado. She writes a bi-weekly editorial commentary in *The Chinoook Observer*.

JUNE STROMBERG moved to the North Coast in 1991 and lives in Seaside, OR. She has previously been published in *RAIN Magazine* along with *The Good Old Days*, *Eminencies*, *Windblown Sheets*, and the *American Portfolio of Poetry and Prose*.

JOHN STRULOEFF grew up near Clatskanie, OR and attended Clatsop Community College as a freshman. He attained his PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and is currently a Stegner Fellow in poetry at Stanford University – a fellowship previously held by another Clatskanie native, Raymond Carver.

TOBY SULLIVAN lives in Kodiak, AK and has been a commercial fishermen there since 1974. In 2005 he received his MFA in Creative Writing from Antioch University Los Angeles. He has appeared at the Fisher Poets Gathering since 1998.

MAYA TRYSIL, a Northwest artist and art therapist, lives on a small farm in Oregon. Her work often reflects her love for the earth. She early experienced the magic of nature and poetry from her father who grew up in the wilds of Ontario. Trysil writes poems and essays and is currently working on her next children's story.

DENNIS WARREN grew up on a small farm in Dundee, OR and taught history for 30 years at Warrenton High School. *The Clock* was the first story he wrote after retiring and has written a screenplay called *Sunny Somewhere* based on *The Clock*.

LARISSA WILLIAMS grew up in Jewell, OR and is currently attending Clatsop Community College. She will be transferring to Oregon State University in the fall. *RAIN Magazine* 2007 is her first time being published.

JENNIFER WINSTON is the producer, director and director of photography for the award-winning documentary film *Fisher Poets*. She started her career at *National Geographic Television* and has gone on to direct, shoot, produce, and write documentaries for CBS, *Discovery*, A&E, *Court TV*, and *The History Channel*. Raised in the Washington D.C. area, Winston graduated from Pitzer College, and currently resides in New York City.

SUE FALKNER WOOD is a retired registered nurse in Astoria, OR. She left nursing in 1990 and now is an active writer.

JOHN WUBBEN has studied photography and graphic design on an informal basis for many years. Always experimenting—often with mixed success—he prefers strong colors and bold images.

AMY ZIDULKA worked as an artist from 1993-2003, specializing in portraits of commercial fishermen. In this way, she paid for school. She is now a professor at Royal Roads University in Victoria BC, Canada and misses Alaska very much.

TARYN ARNOLD, KENNETH BENTON, DARLENE BRAMMER, NEEN DRAGE, CHRIS FREEMAN, DEVAN GILL, LUIS GOMEZ, DAVID RR HOMER, SUSAN RHOADS, & KIRA THORNTON are students of drawing, painting, and photography at Clatsop Community College.

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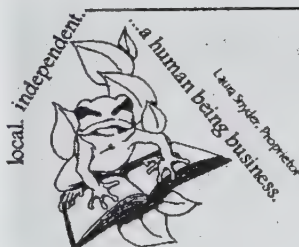
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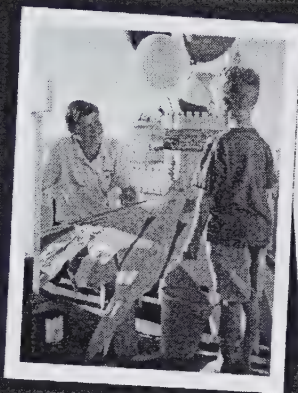
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is dedicated to the memory of

Ellen Shannon



She began the magazine
'Literary Expressions'
which later became RAIN,
and was its first
advisor.

She was a scholar, poet, teacher,
mother, wife, friend,
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